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FINAL FANTASY IV

10 PAGES OF

CASTLEVANIA

Order of Ecclesia rises on DS with shocking new features and twists!

JULY 2008 V230

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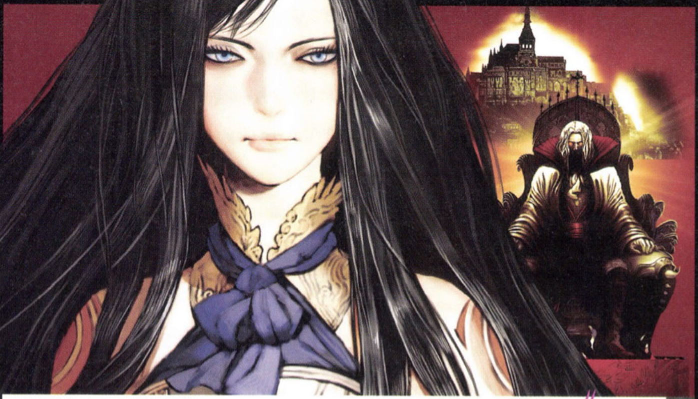

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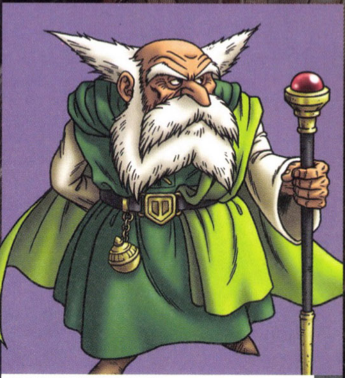

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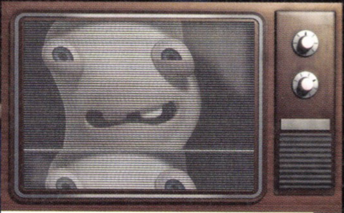

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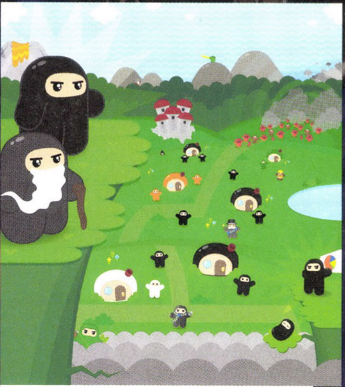

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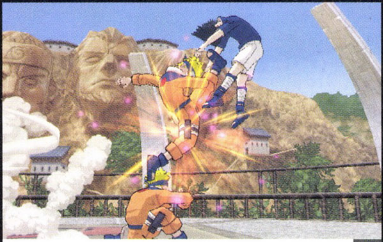

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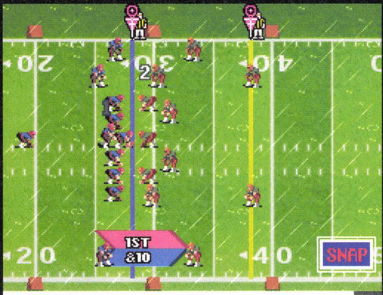

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N64 = NINTENDO 64
VC = VIRTUAL CONSOLE
Wii = Wii
WW = WiiWare

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Pulse

A Classic Series, Better than Ever

I've always loved Castlevania. The moody setting, cool weapons, and challenging action made me a fan the moment I first powered on the NES original. Back when tiny red pixels were as gruesome as games could get, setting off to face Dracula was cutting-edge creepy. And although nobody would call the games scary by today's standards, they still evoke a certain eerie mood that sets them apart from every other action game. Very few series have survived and thrived as Castlevania has, evolving into various forms over two decades of whip-cracking adventures. The games haven't always been knock-outs (the series has especially struggled when the gameplay has shifted to 3-D), but the GBA and DS titles have re-established Castlevania as a fan-favorite franchise.

The series' transformation from a straightforward action game into a Metroid-style adventure—plus the formula's many tweaks with each installment—prove that 2-D games can be just as fun and fresh as they were when Castlevania got its start over 20 years ago. Here's hoping that Dracula is never truly vanquished forever.

CHRIS SLATE **EDITOR IN CHIEF**

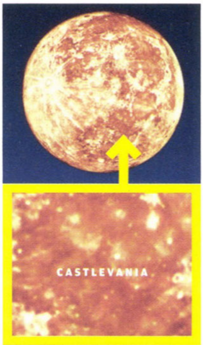
[LETTERS]

Before we get into this month's mail, here's our next topic request: which Nintendo game system (console or handheld) is your all-time favorite, and why? Email your answer to pulse@futureus.com, and be sure to write "Favorite System" for the subject header. Now, to the letters!

MYSTERIOUS MOON

What's your problem? On the Next Month page in V. 229, you tell us to look for clues in the moon, but when we compared it to an identical image the only difference is that yours is just in higher contrast! Did the time machine mess up your heads?

WHITE_PIKMIN



There *was* a clue hidden in the moon—see? You just had to, um, magnify it, like, a billion times...or something.

Well, see, the moon itself was a clue about this month's Castlevania cover game! Um...get it? (Gulp.) Okay, so we stretched things by hinting that clues could be found "in" the moon—it was all Steve's fault! He wanted to deceive everyone, and we tried to stop him but he's freakishly strong!

FOX FOOD

If Mario and Luigi munch on mushrooms, Donkey Kong and Diddy Kong chow down on bananas, Wario devours onions, and Link drinks delicious and nutritious Lon Lon Milk, then what does Fox McCloud ever eat?

CARLIN S.

Hmm...good question. Space bananas, maybe? Moon rocks? Come to think of it, I haven't seen Slippy around lately....

BIG AIR ON YOUR BOARD

What about an adventure game for Wii where, after progressing to a certain point, the character acquires a means to fly by using the Wii Balance Board? You could shift your weight forward to descend, backward to ascend, and left and right to go...left and right! It sounds pretty good, right?

MOOSH222

Or you could sit on the board like a magic carpet and steer with your butt—are you reading this, Prince of Persia developers?

ODD GIRL OUT

My girlfriend gets mad whenever my friends and I start talking about The Legend of Zelda games. We talk about the awesomeness of the music, the story, and gameplay, but she just can't relate. What do you guys do when your loved ones say that you've been "testing" video games too much, or that you just won't shut up about a new Mario game?

MMAN

My wife doesn't mind so much since video games pay the bills and she's a fairly avid game player. If you haven't tried this already, I'd suggest that you show Twilight Princess to your girlfriend, and that you talk about the story in a way that a nongamer can easily understand. If all else fails, show her a photo of Orlando Bloom as Legolas and tell her there's more where that came from in the hunky land of Hyrule.

THE KOOPA QUEEN

In V. 228, Patrick mentioned that he didn't think that Bowser is being evil enough. When you suggested that he needs a Koopa Queen, I thought, "Hey, I could do that!" Sure, he's a little moody sometimes, and is a kleptomaniac when it comes to princesses, but beneath that tough, spiky shell beats the heart of a lonesome lover. I like 'em a little rough around the edges, anyway. Just imagine how cute he would be happily skipping through a field of flowers with me, his gal, at his side. Isn't that a sweet visual?

ARIELLE S.

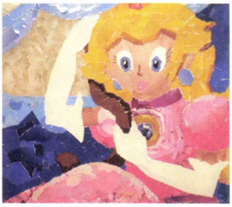
Wow, between this and Henry's letter (see sidebar on the right), love is really in the air this month! Now that Luigi and Bowser both have dates, do we have any takers for Wario and Waluigi? C'mon folks—we put the word out four issues ago that these two were available, and nobody's responded!

REVIEWING OUR REVIEWS

I recently subscribed to NP and have looked at your review scores very carefully. I compared them to other magazine and online reviews and was shocked to see that they were almost identical. Dat's cool. I was expecting to see you guys bumping up the scores just because you work for Nintendo. That was probably stupid of me to think, but whatever. Thanks for being honest.

MOOMAN

We're glad that you noticed! We realize that some people might question whether an official magazine will provide honest, unbiased reviews, which is why we work extrahard to make sure that we get our scores just right.



Do personal preferences for certain qualities or aspects of a game affect the score that you give it? For example, if one of the characters in the game really annoyed you, would you give the game a lower rating? Or if you really liked games of a certain genre, would you rate them higher than other types of games?

DIGIKERO2

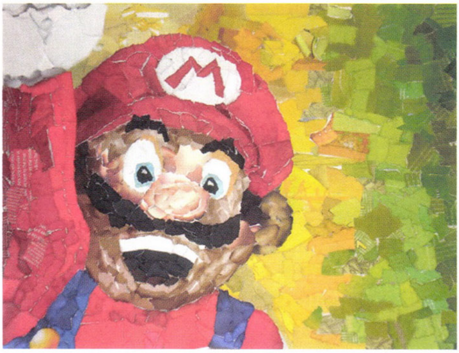
It comes down to how the different aspects of a game impact the overall experience. For example, annoying characters wouldn't be as big a problem in an action game as they would be in a story-heavy RPG. Regarding genres, we won't assign a game to a reviewer that isn't a fan of its type, so every game gets a fair opportunity to impress us.

PAPER MARIO

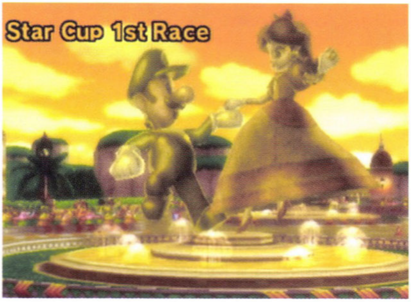
I'm writing to say thank you for putting my collages in your magazine. Since you published them, I have gotten several orders for additional Nintendo collages. I've attached a couple additional pieces that I've completed in the last few months, one of which actually resides in the office of a Nintendo executive!

CHRIS L.

Running your original collages was our pleasure—anything for a fellow Chris! Thanks for sending in the new pieces (shown below), and keep up the amazing work!



It's no wonder that these collages were done by a fellow Chris—they're awesome! (Chris Power!) I've really got to get one for my office....



Thanks to Mario Kart Wii, the answer to the world's most puzzling question has finally been answered: is Daisy Luigi's girlfriend? Yes. On the Daisy Circuit there is a statue of the two of them holding hands. Now if they'd only give us a timeline for Zelda....

HENRY SG

To be accurate, it looks as if that statue depicts Luigi dancing with Daisy, but the implied romance is there nonetheless. Sigh—I suppose this means that I should apologize to the anonymous reader who wrote in about the couple being an item back in V. 226. Mysterious unnamed letter-writer, it appears that I was incorrect in assuming that Daisy wouldn't date Scaredy McGreenPants. Let this be an inspiration to lovelorn gamers: if Luigi can get a girl, there's definitely someone out there for everyone.

WHAT'S THE BEST?

Have you guys ever fought over what the best game of all time is? I think that it's Ninja Gaiden: Dragon Sword all the way, but my friend picks Mario Party DS. Yuck! (Sorry if that offends anyone.)

SQUI-G!!!

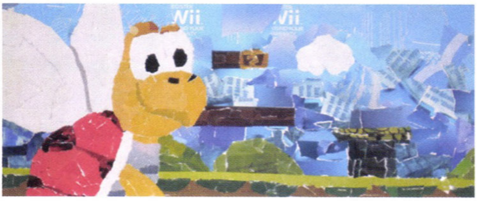
Don't worry, I'm sure that Mario Party DS fans are only waving about their torches and pitchforks as a sign of support. The team here at NP does indeed discuss these kind of important issues all the time—our talks usually end with someone getting poked in the eye or bitten. On this subject, keep an eye out for something really big next issue...if all of us are still in one piece by then.

DON'T FORGET THE HARDCORE CROWD

My friends and I really want to see more hardcore titles come out for Nintendo's flagship console. Yes, we have No More Heroes and Resident Evil 4, but we want more. Either third-party publishers need to step it up, or it's time for Nintendo to get its hands dirty.

BJG93

While those aren't the only M-rated titles, I see your point. All I can say is...don't miss next issue. And bring extra underwear.



Wouldn't Nintendo be the perfect company to create an amusement park? Envision this: you enter the front gate and see shop after shop of Nintendo merchandise, then you select your park. Hmm, will I choose the Mushroom Kingdom, Dream Land, the Lylat System, or Hyrule? I'll try the Mushroom Kingdom, of course. On your left is Toad's House, Peach's Castle is on your right, and straight ahead is the bridge that spans over to Yoshi's Island. Come nerds, come all, to NintendOASIS!

MARK B.

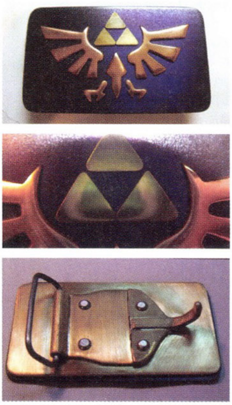
Mark, I'm really tempted to make fun of you for this, but I have to admit that I would be first in line at the grand opening. Nintendo is the only game company I can think of with a rich enough history of amazing characters and places to fill an entire theme park with cool stuff. I call first dibs on the Twilight Princess river ride!

KEEP YOUR PANTS UP... WITH STYLE

Here is a Belt Buckle that I made in my metal 10 class at school [see the series of photos below]. It took me over 10 hours to create; I made the backing out of steel and the insignia out of copper and brass. I hope you guys like it!

JAKE P.

That's pretty cool, Jake! It's way cooler than those Kirby suspenders that Justin tried to fashion out of paper chains and cotton candy. And, I suspect, a lot less flammable.

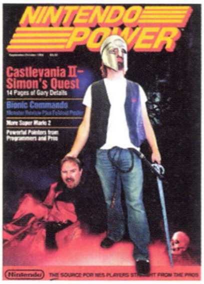


BARNYARD BONKERS

There is an enemy in the Zelda games which cannot be stopped: the chicken. I try, every single day on my Zelda games, to destroy them once and for all, but they never die! I played around with a chicken in Phantom Hourglass and it turned red and sent a million of its minions to kill me! Then in Minish Cap, the chicks there are cute until you shrink down and they surround you and start attacking! In Wind Waker, even the pigs are unstoppable. It is an insult. My first question: why do chickens attack us? And second: how do you defeat them? And third: What have *we* ever done to *them*?

I DEFEAT ALL

I hope that Zelda isn't holding her breath waiting for you to save her kingdom. (By the way, you should really add "except chickens" to the end of your name.)



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THE YIN TO OUR YANG

Do you have any archenemies like Mario has Bowser?

JARED S.

Chris Hoffman's archenemy (or more accurately, his nemesis) is former NP staffer Pete Michaud [shown above], and Steve's is Chris Hoffman. Mine is a salad.

POWER UP

Today at school we had to do a physical fitness test—the mile run. I ran an embarrassing 11 minutes, 10 seconds. Afterwards I thought, "Do Sonic's shoes help him run that fast?" After pondering this I decided to ask if any of you guys wish that you had the characteristics of any video-game character.

ANDREW K.

I wish that I had Mario's perfectly formed mustache, and Steve would choose his Wii Fit trainer's ability to do 50 push-ups.

DUH-TECTIVE

While looking through my dad's old NES stuff I found the Duck Hunt light gun and noticed that "Zapper" was written on its side. Then I realized that the Wii gun is also called the Zapper. Was the name reused on purpose or was it a total coincidence?

MICHAEL G

Michael, this conspiracy could go all the way to the top.

PLEASE WRITE US

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Understand that the magazine staff is separate from Nintendo; we don't make the games.

You don't need to send us links to game coverage on the Web—trust us, we see it all.

There's no need to ask about the status of upcoming games; we'll always pass along any updates as soon as we get them.

NINTENDO POWER
VAMPIRE KILLERS

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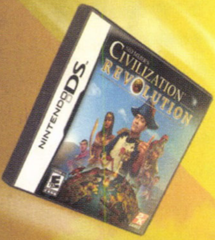
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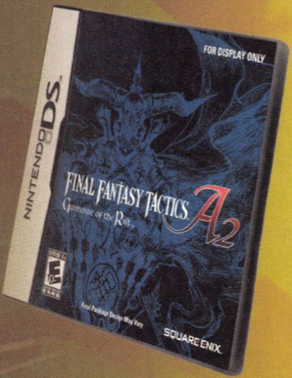
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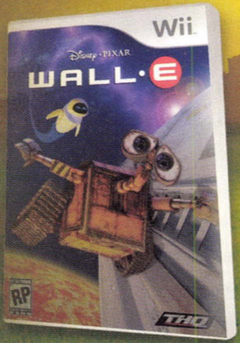
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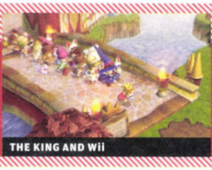
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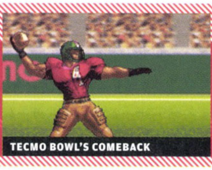
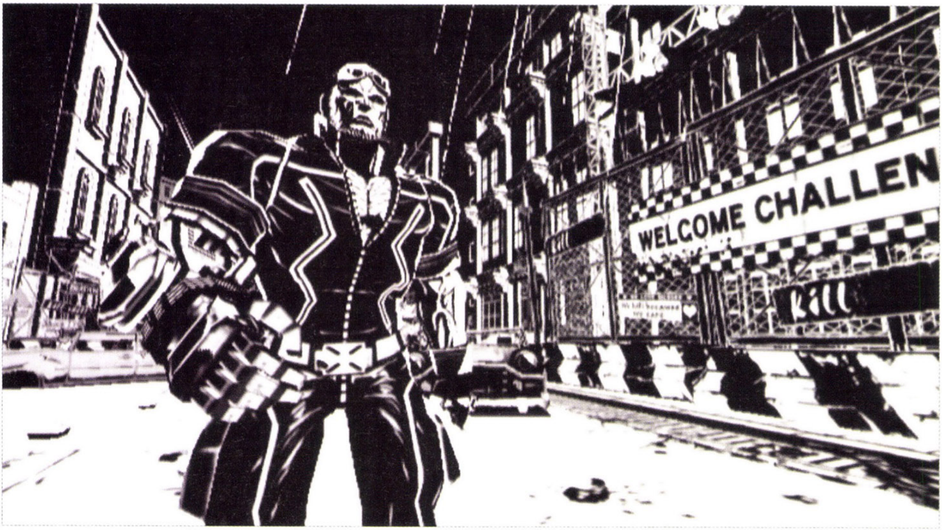

TECMO BOWL'S COMEBACK

PLAYING WITH POWER



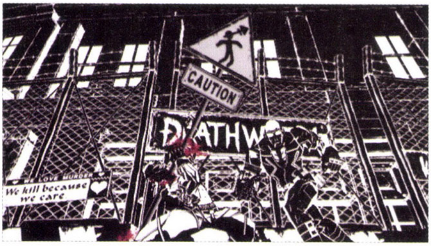
Stark Raving Mad

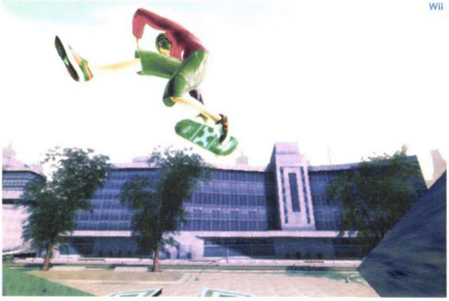
Sega joins forces with PlatinumGames for the craziest action game in recent memory: MadWorld.

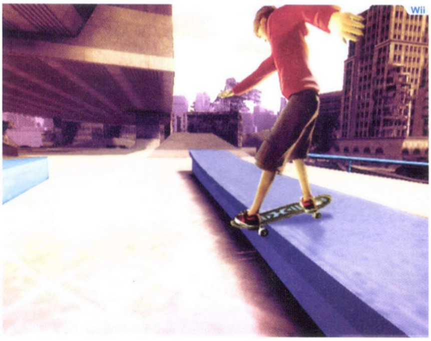
After Capcom dissolved Clover Studio (the team responsible for such gems as Viewtiful Joe and Okami) in 2006, most of the key creative staff went on to form a new independent development company named Seeds. Other than changing its name to PlatinumGames, the upstart studio had remained silent ever since, leaving fans to wonder what this talented group had up its sleeve. We finally got the answer in May when PlatinumGames announced a partnership with Sega for a host of new titles, including the Wii-exclusive MadWorld.

Produced by Atsushi Inaba and slated for an early-2009 release, MadWorld looks every bit as weird and innovative as you'd expect given the studio's pedigree. Charged with a crime he didn't commit (or so he claims), the game's protagonist must participate in a deadly game show to earn his freedom. You'll not only have access to a wide variety of weapons, but you can use almost anything in the environment to dispatch your foes (including street signs, as you can see). The violence is hilariously over-the-top, accentuated by a gleeful commentary that accompanies the action at all times. Reminiscent of a graphic novel, the unique black-and-white (and red) visuals are even more striking in motion.

Needless to say, this one is for mature audiences only. Expect much, much more on MadWorld in next month's exclusive in-depth cover story. In the meantime, be sure to check out Platinum's first DS title on page 18. —STEVE T.

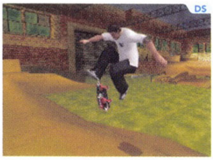


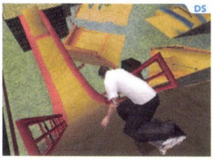




Get on Board

EA's hit skateboarding game gets reinvented for Wii and DS. Are you ready to **Skate It**?





Last year, EA's Skate did the unthinkable: it dethroned Tony Hawk's Pro Skater as the king of skateboarding games. Ironically, its trump card was being everything the Tony Hawk games aren't, from the more-realistic aesthetic to the de-emphasis on long, button-based combos. And now the game is coming to Wii and DS with a slightly new name—Skate It—and brand-new controls.

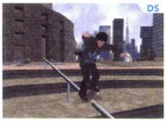
At the heart of the original PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360 game was an innovative control scheme, simply called Flickit. As the name suggests, every trick was performed using a combination of "flicks," with each of the player's legs mapped to an analog stick. The result was entirely intuitive, realistic, and impressively polished.

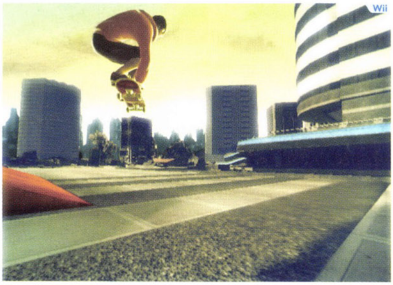
When designing the game for Wii, the clever minds at EA once again thought outside the box, and came up with an approach that's impossible to deny: simulate the actual skateboard using the Wii remote. The journey wasn't an easy one, though. "The lack of dual sticks was definitely an early challenge," explains producer Mike McCartney. "However, in a lot of ways it helped us simplify things to focus on playability and intuitiveness—the most important aspects of Flickit. After several iterations of the control design, the idea that the Wii remote was the gamer's skateboard started to resonate with the team. Once this idea was in place, the controls came into place very naturally. To steer, you rotate the Wii remote to the left and right; to ollie you lift the Wii remote; to kick-flip you twist and lift the Wii remote; all mirroring the motion of the gamer's skateboard."

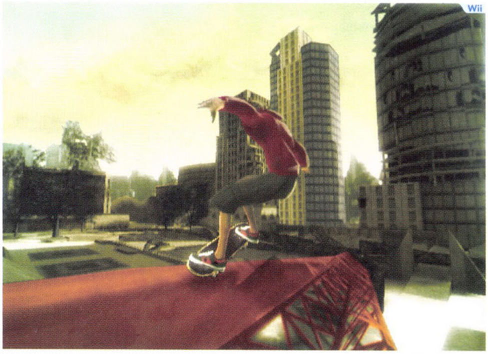
Also supported in the game are two optional control schemes, one involving the nunchuk, and another that utilizes the Wii Balance Board. But don't expect anything too complicated or zany. "As is the case with our Wii-remote motion controls, we are designing our Balance Board controls to ensure that only the moves that make sense on the board are supported," assures McCartney. The DS version of the game will utilize the touch pad and stylus for tricks; further details will be announced down the line.

Ultimately, Skate It's success will depend on just how well the controls work and feel, but McCartney insists the game will hold its own: "Developing for Wii has given us license to stylize the game in a way that is additive to the overall gameplay experience, [which is] something we're all proud to say is uniquely Nintendo."

—KAISER H.



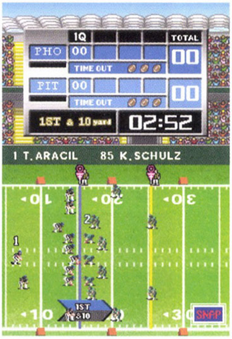




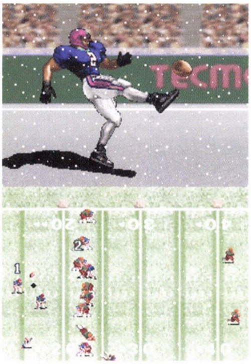
The Wii version of Skate It boasts some nice character models and lighting effects. It's good to see EA putting more effort into its recent Wii projects.

New Set of Downs

After a long hiatus, Tecmo is ready for some football once again with the announcement of **Tecmo Bowl: Kickoff**, its flagship franchise's DS debut.

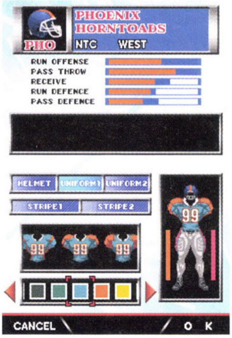


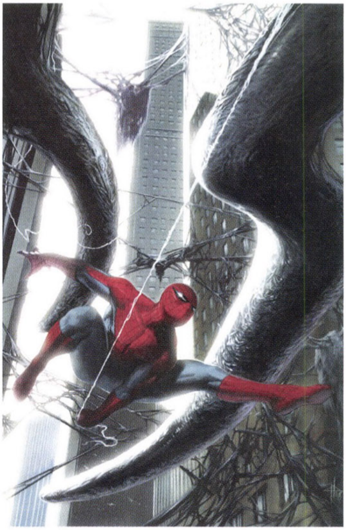
Back in the late '80s when John Madden Football was still in its growing stages, Tecmo Bowl ruled the gaming gridiron. It didn't have an NFL license and it didn't need one. All it needed was a handful of plays for 16 teams and perfectly executed run-and-gun play control. The beauty of it was that gamers who weren't schooled on the intricacies of the sport could move up and down the field with the best of them and make lots of big plays. The series continued into the '90s with the Tecmo Super Bowl games and an NFL Player's Association deal, but it's had minimal exposure for more than a decade. Last year Tecmo hinted that it would revive the franchise in 2008, and at the beginning of May the news became official. Tecmo Bowl: Kickoff, exclusive to the Nintendo DS, will pick up where Tecmo Super Bowl left off: with customizable teams, intuitive control, and explosive cut-scenes. The scenes will unfold on the top screen while gameplay continues on the touch screen, and player movement will be stylus-controlled. The game features 32 teams, but no official NFL-related licenses. Industrious gamers, however, are sure to make their team names, cities, colors, and player names match those of the real-life squads. Individual athletic abilities and team playbooks are also customizable. The title has a robust single-player season in the Tecmo Super Bowl mold, but the developers know the franchise's popularity was triggered by high-scoring multiplayer sessions. With that in mind Kickoff supports both local wireless and Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection-enabled cross-country play. Driving music has also been a big part of the game, so Tecmo Bowl traditionalists will be happy to hear that the original tunes return in the form of updated remixes. The title is set to kick off in the fall, just in time for football season. —GEORGE S.



Few Tecmo Bowl fans punt. But in case you do, you'll see it happen in detail on the top screen.

Haven't heard of the Phoenix Horntoads? Kickoff's customization lets you change the team into something more familiar.





Control Issues

With no movie to follow, Activision turns to Spider-Man's fans to chart the direction of the hero's next adventure, **Web of Shadows**.

In *Spider-Man 3*, Peter Parker lost control thanks to the influence of the alien suit that became Venom. In Spider-Man: Web of Shadows, control is placed in the hands of players and fans, both before its release and during gameplay. By registering at the game's official website—www.seize-control.com—you can vote on issues that relate to content and to how the game will be presented to the public. During play, you'll mold Spidey's fighting style, upgrades, and plot direction. You'll also be able to choose the webbed one's friends and foes from other characters in the Marvel Comics universe. The main threat is an otherworldly force that has invaded New York City; given the subject of the new Alone in the Dark title, such threats seem to be a gaming trend for 2008. Web of Shadows, under development at Shaba Games and Treyarch, will swing onto both Wii and DS this fall. —GEORGE S.

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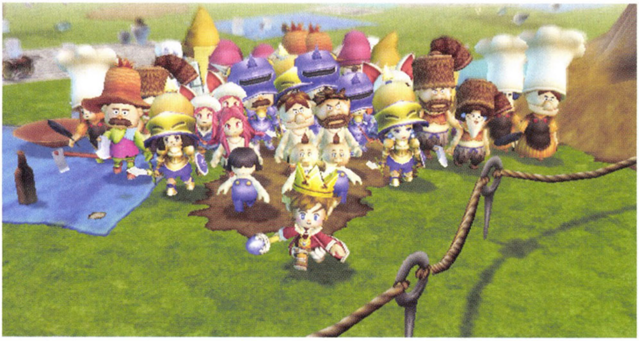


Kingdom Come

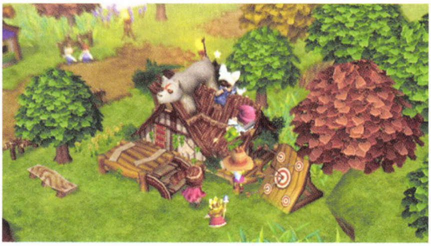
A Japanese dream team bets on Wii with **Little King's Story**.

Hot off the announcement that XSEED Games and Marvelous Entertainment are entering a copublishing deal comes another exciting announcement: the development of the Wii-exclusive title Little King's Story. While the unassuming name may not light a fire in your belly, this game has some of the biggest Japanese names behind it, and there's simply nothing else like it.

Little King's Story has you playing the role of Corobo, a timid village boy who happens upon a magical crown. Its ability to charm anyone it likes into following an order sets off a series of events that eventually has young Corobo playing king to his village, with the responsibility of creating the ultimate kingdom.

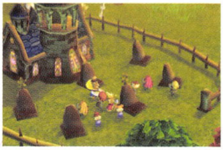
Little King's Story features an unusual mix of game genres, making it hard to classify. Elements of life simulation, real-time strategy, and simple adventure all come into play—controlled with one button, no less—as you order your people to search for treasure and build and break structures while you unite the surrounding territories into one glorious kingdom. Of course, any king worthy of his throne gives as much as he receives, so you'll be taking on your subjects' requests as well.

If the concept sounds vaguely familiar, it could be because Yasuhiro Wada, creator of the popular life-simulation series Harvest Moon, is heading up the game. His experience should be hugely beneficial to the title, as should his team members': Hideo Minaba (art director on Final Fantasy XII), Youichi Kawaguchi (main programmer on Dragon Quest VIII), and Yoko Shimomura (music composer of the Kingdom Hearts series) are all onboard, rounding out this development dream team.

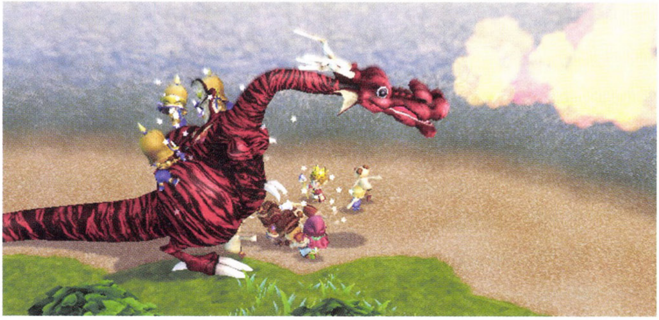


To celebrate the announcement of Little King's Story, Marvelous and XSEED have organized a contest to have 99 players' art included in an in-game museum, with the grand-prize winner's creation actually coming to life in the game. The contest, called UMA (Unidentified Mysterious Animal), should be live by the time you read this, so check www.xseedgames.com for more details.

With a list of high-profile names behind it plus wholly original gameplay, Little King's Story sounds like it will be one to remember. Expect much more on the game as we near its winter 2008 release. —KAISER H.



[Above] As king, you'll occasionally have to attend funerals and at least pretend to care about your fallen subjects.



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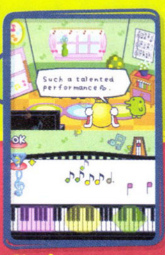

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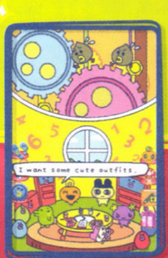

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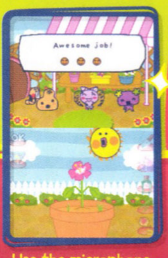

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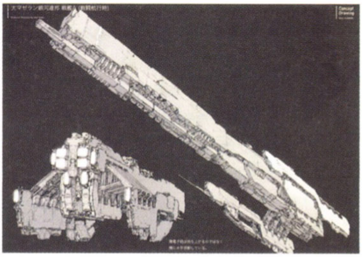
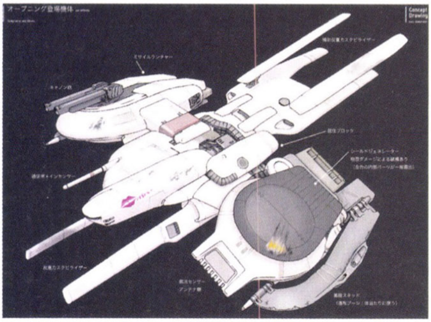
Infinity and Beyond

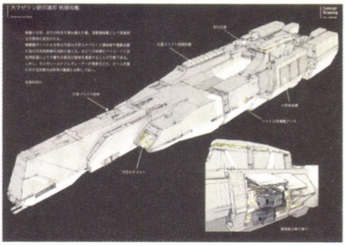
Sega and PlatinumGames face the final frontier with **Infinite Line**, a sci-fi RPG for the DS.

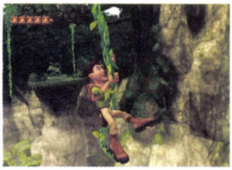


While Sega and PlatinumGames are heading to a mad, mad world on Wii (see page 12), that's not the only far-out destination they'll be visiting on Nintendo systems—they're also embarking on an epic intergalactic journey with Infinite Line (working title) for DS. Produced by Atsushi Inaba (one of the masterminds behind Okami and Viewtiful Joe) and directed by Hifumi Kouno (the director of Steel Battalion on Xbox), Infinite Line focuses on building, customizing, and controlling a wide variety of spaceships. Though gameplay specifics are scarce at press time, Sega has confirmed that the RPG will feature more than 200 characters and 150 types of spacecraft, and you'll be able to control multiple ships simultaneously. Sega also promises that the game will be one of the deepest, most complex role-playing experiences on the DS—and given the pedigree of the developers, we have no reason to doubt it. We'll have more details on Infinite Line as its 2009 release approaches. —**CHRIS H.**



Infinite Line's ship designs are pretty cool, but what's even cooler is that you get to customize the ships as you see fit.





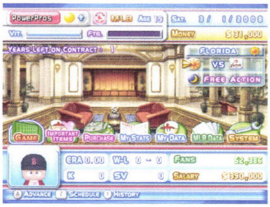
Pitfall Harry Returns

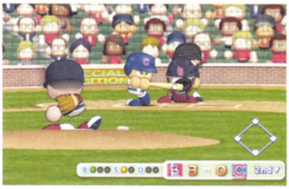
This fall, platforming's original hero swings back onto the scene with **Pitfall: The Big Adventure.** Developed by Edge of Reality exclusively for Wii, Harry's latest adventure is set in the Peruvian jungle and will be designed to take full advantage of Wii's motion-sensing controls. The game looks like a continuation of 2004's Pitfall: The Last Expedition, which was also the work of EoR.

Little Big League

The great American pastime collides with the role-playing genre once more as **MLB Power Pros 2008** hits the mound for Wii and DS.

Daisuke Matsuzaka wasn't the only Japanese phenom to debut in the US last year. Konami's long-running and wildly popular Power Pros series finally arrived on these shores courtesy of 2K Sports, introducing American fans to its unique blend of cartoony character models, hardcore sim elements, and the intriguing RPG-inspired Success mode. The franchise returns to Wii this July, and promises a host of improvements for its sophomore campaign, including 40-man rosters, changing pitch speeds, and an expanded story-based career that pairs Success mode with the all-new MLB Life mode. Your created character begins Success mode in Double-A, and you'll need to work on improving his skills to garner attention from big-league scouts while balancing various situations in his personal life. Once you've completed Success mode, you can export your player to MLB Life and lead him through a 20-year career both on and off the field. In addition to playing games, you'll need to sign contracts, purchase automobiles, make charitable donations, and build relationships with teammates and loved ones. A DS version is also on deck and currently slated for a fall release. —**STEVE T.**





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GAME WATCH FORECAST

Lots of exciting games were announced this month, including the crazy, over-the-top MadWorld. We'll have more information on this awesome-looking game next issue.

Wii		
Active Life: Outdoor Challenge	Namco Bandai	7/08
Alone in the Dark	Atari	6/08
Brothers in Arms: Road to Hill 30	Ubisoft	6/08
Catch of the Day	Electronic Arts	6/08
Cooking Mama Cook Off 2	Majesco	6/08
Crash: Mind over Mutant	Sierra	10/08
de Blob	THQ	6/08
The Destiny of Zorro	Pronto Games	TBA
Disaster: Day of Crisis	Nintendo	TBA
Don King Presents: Prizefighter	Take-Two Interactive	9/08
Dragonology	Codemasters	Q4 08
FaceBreaker	Electronic Arts	11/08
FIFA 09 All-Play	Electronic Arts	2008
Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Crystal Bearers	Square Enix	TBA
Final Fantasy Fables: Chocobo's Dungeon	Square Enix	7/08
Ford Racing Off Road	Empire Interactive	6/08
Ghostbusters	Sierra	10/08
Guitar Hero: Aerosmith	Activision	6/08
Harvest Moon: Tree of Tranquility	Natsume	7/08
The Incredible Hulk	Sega	6/08
Indoor Sports	Konami	TBA
The King of Fighters Collection: The Orochi Saga	SNK Playmore	Q4 08
The Legend of Spyro: Dawn of the Dragon	Sierra	10/08
LEGO Batman: The Videogame	Warner Bros. Interactive	2008
LEGO Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures	LucasArts	6/08
Line Rider 2: Unbound	InXile	SUM 08
Little King's Story	XSEED Games	WIN 08
Littlest Pet Shop	Electronic Arts	FALL 08
Madden 09 All-Play	Electronic Arts	8/08
MadWorld	Sega	2009
Mario Super Sluggers	Nintendo	TBA
MLB Power Pros 2008	2K Sports	FALL 08
Monster Lab	Eidos	9/08
Mushroom Men	Gamecock Media Group	10/08
MySims Kingdom	Electronic Arts	2008
Naruto: Clash of Ninja Revolution 2	Tomy	FALL 08
NBA Live 09 All-Play	Electronic Arts	FALL 08
NCAA Football 09 All-Play	EA Sports	6/08
NERF N-Strike	Electronic Arts	FALL 08
Order Up!	Zoo	7/08
Pitfall: The Big Adventure	Activision	FALL 08
Rock Band	MTV Games	6/08
Runaway: The Dream of the Turtle	Focus Home Interactive	TBA
Rygar: The Battle of Argus	Tecmo	6/08
Sam & Max Season One	The Adventure Company	FALL 08
Samba de Amigo	Sega	8/08
Samurai Shodown Anthology	SNK Playmore	Q4 08
Sid Meier's Civilization Revolution	2K Games	9/08
Skate It	Electronic Arts	2008
SNK Arcade Classics Vol. 1	SNK Playmore	Q4 08
Sonic Unleashed	Sega	Q4 08
Space Chimps	Brash	SUM 08
Spider-Man: Web of Shadows	Activision	FALL 08
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	LucasArts	9/08
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09 All-Play	Electronic Arts	8/08
TNA iMPACT!	Midway	6/08
Top Spin 3	2K Sports	6/08
Ultimate Band	Disney Interactive	9/08
Wacky Races	Eidos	6/08
WALL*E	THQ	6/08
We Cheer	Namco Bandai	FALL 08
We Love Golf!	Capcom	7/08
Wizardology	Codemasters	Q4 08
Wonderworld Amusement Park	Majesco	6/08
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2009	THQ	FALL 08

NINTENDO DS		
Arkanoid DS	Square Enix	6/08
Bangai-O Spirits	D3 Publisher	8/08
Big Bang Mini	SouthPeak	FALL 08
Bleach: Dark Souls	Sega	8/08
Blood Bowl	Focus Home Interactive	2008
Brave	SouthPeak Interactive	Q3 08
Broken Sword	Ubisoft	9/08
Cake Mania 2	Majesco	6/08
Carnival Games	2K Play	SUM 08
Castlevania: Order of Ecclesia	Konami	FALL 08
Catch of the Day	Electronic Arts	6/08
Commando: Steel Disaster	XS Games	8/08
Construction Combat: Lock's Quest	THQ	FALL 08
Crash: Mind over Mutant	Sierra	10/08
de Blob	THQ	2008
Dinosaur King	Sega	8/08
Disciples II	Strategy First	TBA
Disgaea DS	NIS America	7/08
Don King Presents: Prizefighter	Take-Two Interactive	9/08
Doodle Hex	TBA	TBA
Dragon Quest IV	Square Enix	9/08
Dragon Quest V	Square Enix	TBA
Dragon Quest VI	Square Enix	TBA
Dragonology	Codemasters	Q4 08
Drawn to Life: SpongeBob SquarePants Edition	THQ	FALL 08
Etrian Odyssey II: Heroes of Lagaard	Atlus	6/08
Final Fantasy IV	Square Enix	7/08
Final Fantasy Tactics A2: The Sealed Grimoire	Square Enix	6/08
From the Abyss	Aksys	2008
Garfield Gets Real	DSI Games	6/08
Gauntlet	Eidos	9/08
Ghostbusters	Sierra	10/08
GRID	Codemasters	6/08
Guitar Hero: On Tour	Activision	6/08
Harvest Moon: Island of Happiness	Natsume	6/08
The Incredible Hulk	Sega	6/08
Infinite Line	Sega	2009
Izuna 2: The Unemployed Ninja Returns	Atlus	7/08
The Legend of Spyro: Dawn of the Dragon	Sierra	10/08
LEGO Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures	LucasArts	6/08
LEGO Batman: The Videogame	Warner Bros. Interactive	2008
Line Rider 2: Unbound	InXile	SUM 08
Littlest Pet Shop	Electronic Arts	FALL 08
Looney Tunes: Cartoon Concerto	Eidos	6/08
Mega Man Star Force 2: Zerker X Ninja	Capcom	6/08
Mega Man Star Force 2: Zerker X Saurian	Capcom	6/08
Metal Slug 7	SNK Playmore	Q4 08
MLB Power Pros 2008	2K Sports	FALL 08
Moon	Mastiff	Q4 08
Mushroom Men: Rise of the Fungi	Gamecock Media Group	10/08
My Weight Loss Coach	Ubisoft	6/08
MySims Kingdom	Electronic Arts	2008
Nancy Drew: The Mystery of the Clue Bender Society	Majesco	7/08
Naruto: Path of the Ninja 2	Tomy	9/08
NERF N-Strike	Electronic Arts	FALL 08
New International Track & Field	Konami	2008
Ninjatown	SouthPeak Interactive	10/08
PipeMania	Empire Interactive	6/08
Pirate Battle	Orbital Media	TBA
Prey the Stars	Koei	TBA
Professor Branium	Destineer	Q3 08
Puzzle Quest: Galactrix	D3PA	10/08
Red Bull BC One	Ignition	TBA
Robocalypse	TBA	SPR 08
Runaway: The Dream of the Turtle	Focus Home Interactive	TBA
Shining Stars	DSI Games	6/08
Sid Meier's Civilization Revolution	2K Games	7/08
Skate It	Electronic Arts	2008
Sonic Chronicles: The Dark Brotherhood	Sega	FALL 08
Space Chimps	Brash	SUM 08
Space Invaders Extreme	Square Enix	6/08
Spectrobes: Beyond the Portals	Disney Interactive	10/08
Spider-Man: Web of Shadows	Activision	FALL 08
SpongeBob SquarePants: Drawn to Life	THQ	Q3 08
Spore Creatures	Electronic Arts	9/08
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed	LucasArts	9/08
Summon Night: Twin Age	Atlus	6/08
Tamagotchi Connection: Corner Shop 3	Namco Bandai	6/08
Tecmo Bowl: Kickoff	Tecmo	FALL 08
Tornado	Ignition	TBA
TrackMania DS	Focus Home Interactive	Q4 08
Trauma Center: Under the Knife 2	Atlus	SUM 08
Ultimate Band	Disney Interactive	9/08
Viva Piñata: Pocket Paradise	THQ	FALL 08
Wacky Races	Eidos	6/08
WALL*E	THQ	6/08
Warlords DS	Strategy First	TBA
Wizardology	Codemasters	Q4 08
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2009	THQ	FALL 08
Zubo	Electronic Arts	2008

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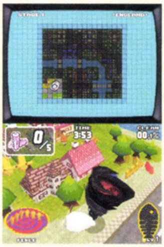
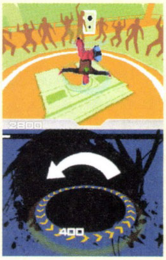


Do the Twist

Restore the Earth using the power of wind in Ignition's Tornado for DS.

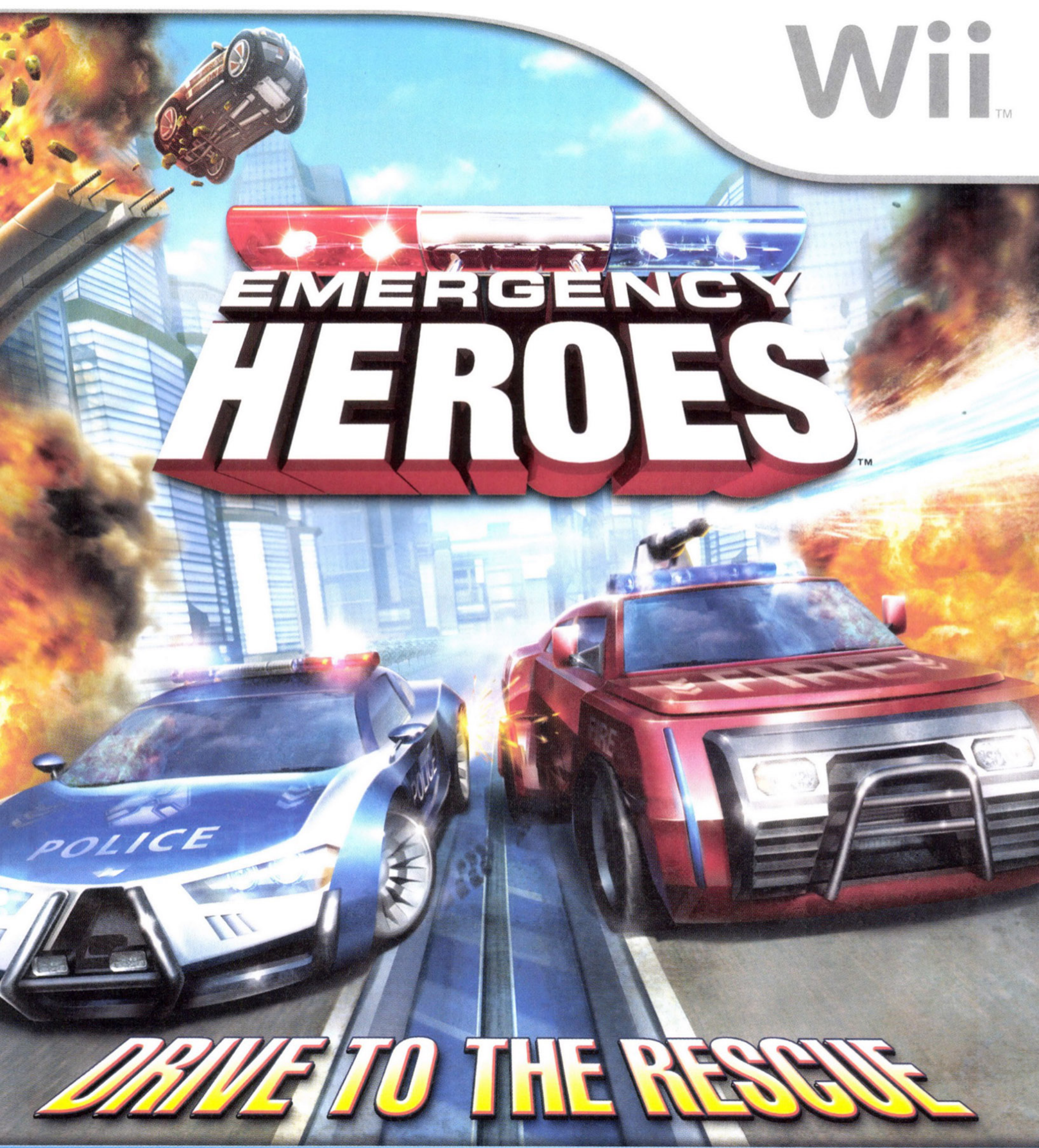
Katamari Damacy has yet to hit Nintendo systems, so Ignition is bringing DS owners the next-best thing. In Tornado, you'll collect buildings and other objects by making circles on the touch screen and blowing into the mic, saving the Earth from a greedy prince in the process.



Break It Down

Bust mad DS moves in Red Bull BC One.

If you've been wondering where all the breakdancing games are, wonder no more—Red Bull BC One is coming to DS courtesy of Ignition. Based on the real-life contest (BC is short for breakdance championship), the game lets you take your B-boy to the top through puzzle-oriented gameplay.



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WiiWare has finally arrived in North America, ushering in new ways to enjoy Wii. So what does the future of the service hold? Read on to find out.

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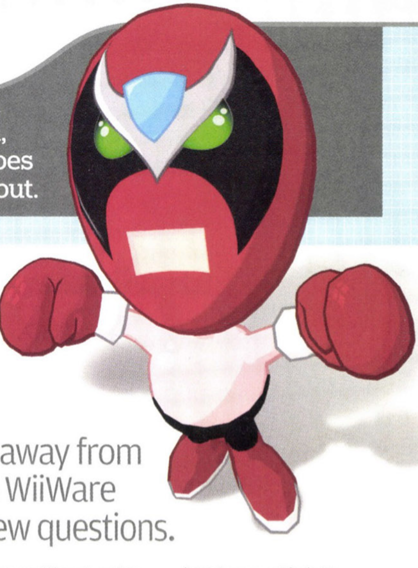


Strong Bad to the Bone

Internet icon **Strong Bad** steps away from his computer to star in his own WiiWare game—and answer our interview questions.

If you're not familiar with Strong Bad, the masked, shirtless, boxing-glove-wearing wrestler from Homestarrunner.com, you'd better be soon. That's because his comedic point-and-click adventure game, Strong Bad's Cool Game for Attractive People (SBCG4AP for short) is coming to WiiWare this summer from the folks at Telltale Games. As he'd be quick to tell you, Strong Bad is more or less the epitome of awesomeness (as evidenced by his fashion sense), and SBCG4AP is all about trying to "handle his style"—in other words, mouthing off to NPCs, randomly breaking into song, and answering email with the most bizarre responses imaginable.

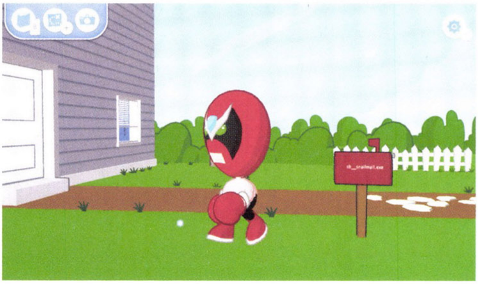
As the first entry in a five-episode series, SBCG4AP sets the groundwork for the following chapters (which Telltale plans to release at regular intervals) with simple controls—you guide the cursor by moving the Wii remote, interact by pressing A, and access your inventory by pressing B. Perhaps more importantly, the game keeps all of Homestarrunner.com's quirky humor intact: the game's plot revolves around trying to erase dim-witted athlete Homestar Runner's criminal record (he was arrested for indecent exposure) so he'll stop moping around Strong Bad's house. To do so, you'll have to explore numerous locales, solve item-oriented puzzles, and converse with other characters such as Strong Sad (Strong Bad's brother), Marzipan (Homestar's sorta-girlfriend), and The Cheat (Strong Bad's oft-abused sidekick). The Telltale crew estimates it will take three to four hours to complete the main quest, which doesn't count extracurricular activities like finding pages to create your own stick-figure-based *Teen Girl Squad* comic and playing retro-inspired minigames such as the man-versus-reptile action of Snake Boxer 5.

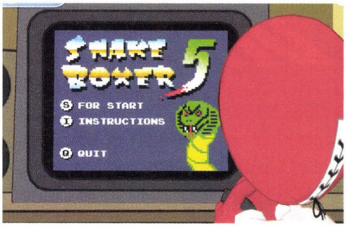
So far the game is shaping up as a solid and uniquely funny adventure, but don't just take our word for it. We got in touch with Strong Bad himself (courtesy of creators Mike and Matt Chapman) to learn what else to expect from SBCG4AP. Warning: answers may not be suitable for the severely sane. Read them with an accent and a weird cadence if necessary. —CHRIS H.

NINTENDO POWER **Strong Bad's Cool Game for Attractive People is kind of a long title. Did you consider any alternate names?**
STRONG BAD "Strong Bad: Great Graphics, Great Gameplay, Great Guy" was the original name, but the marketing people said it sounded too much like "Adventures of Lolo," so we changed it.

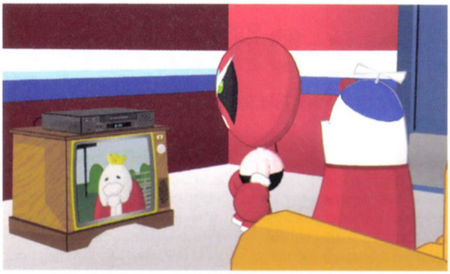
VIRTUAL CONSOLE GAMES

- DOUBLE DRAGON
- FANTASY ZONE
- MEGA TURRICAN
- PHANTASY STAR III: GENERATIONS OF DOOM
- POKÉMON PUZZLE LEAGUE
- RENEGADE
- RIVER CITY RANSOM

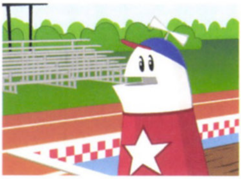




Yes! Snake Boxer 5! It may not reach the heights of Snake Boxer 2, but it's far superior to Snake Boxer 4.



Strong Bad gets to visit only the most exotic locations, such as his basement (left) and these top-of-the-line bleachers (below).



What will happen to people who try to play this game but are unable to handle your style?
Temporary loss of vision, spontaneous diaper, cactus tongue.

Can unattractive people play your game? Will it make them more attractive?
Non-attractoids are perfectly welcome to try playing SBCG4AP, but I don't think they'll figure out how to make it past the title screen, and it definitely won't make them any more attractive. I made sure they programmed all that stuff in there.

How do you feel about potentially millions of players being able to control your actions?
I was very against it at first. I wanted it to be a sit-'n'-watch game instead of a point-'n'-click game. But then the programmers told me that's called a cartoon, and I already have one of those.

Why is your first game coming out on Wii and not other systems?
Because you promised me 500 rupees. And a pet Skulltula.

Do you have a Wii? How hard is it to play Wii with your boxing gloves on? What games do you play on it?
How hard is it for *you* to play Wii with your Power Glove on? Do they still make you wear those around the office? [Editor's note: Yes.] Oh, and the games I play on the Wii are all the free ones you're gonna send me.

Will that dragon you drew, Trogdor, appear in your game?
That's a trade secret. All 46 of your readers would have to sign NDAs if I told you that.

You seem to have a lot in common with Nintendo of America president Reggie Fils-Aime. Are you related, by chance?
Look, whatever Reggie fills is his own business. He can fill his grandma's shoes with corn for all I care. Ooh, that's a good idea....

How would you react if you went into a restaurant for a burger, but they were all out?
Temporary loss of vision, spontaneous diaper, cactus tongue.

Why is your game coming out for WiiWare instead of as a retail game? Would it be cooler if it came with a box and a manual?
Who was the last person that actually read a video-game manual? Galileo? Anyone who can't figure out how to mash a bunch of buttons on a game pad shouldn't be indulging in video-gamery in the first place. I *will* miss the eight blank pages for "Notes" in the back of the manual, though.

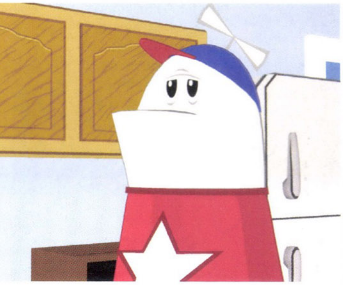
We're very excited to play Snake Boxer 5. How does it compare to the rest of the Snake Boxer series? What's your highest score in Snake Boxer 5?
Snake Boxer 5 revolutionized the franchise with its introduction of *the health meter*! It also made waves with its controversial subplot where the boxer falls in love with a Cottonmouth. As for my high score, after getting to round two zillion, my console melted into the carpet and mysteriously broke my camera, so I couldn't take a picture for proof.

Who is more awesome: Mr. T or Chuck Norris?
Strong Bad of America LLC does not comment on lame questions, trendy in-jokes, and played-out internet gags. [Editor's note: We believe Strong Bad simply can't handle Mr. T's style.]

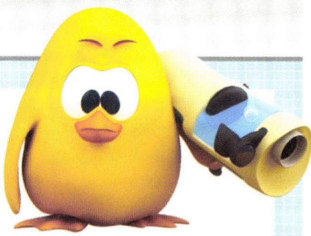
Will players be able to use any of your awesome wrestling moves in the game?
Unfortunately, no. Most of my wrestling moves would require way more teraflops than the Wii can handle. Hey, that's a great name for a wrestling move: The Terror Flop!!

Will there be any They Might Be Giants songs in the game?
Only if my nerd-music detector stops working. This is a Strong BAD game, not a Strong SAD game, man!

I know the game isn't done yet, but what kind of score do you think it will get on a scale from 1 to 10 (10 being the best), and why?
Oh wait, one's not the best? Thank you *so much* for explaining that new concept to me! You Nintendorks are a buncha rocket scientists over there. Good thing, too. 'Cause it's gonna take a super-genius to tabulate the astronomically high score of my game.



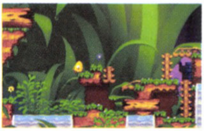
SBCG4AP features all...well, most... er, at least some of your favorite Homestarrunner.com characters.

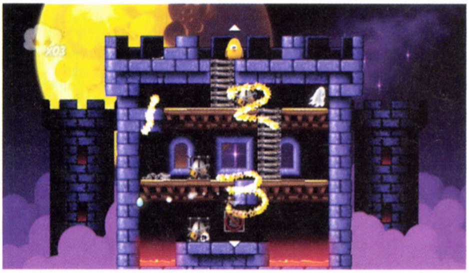


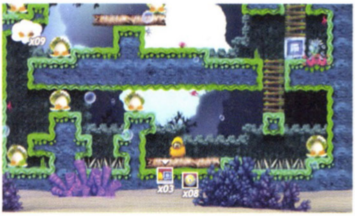
Little, Yellow, Different

A critical gem on Game Boy Color, poultry puzzler **Toki Tori** makes the leap to WiiWare with updated graphics and new levels.

Released for Game Boy Color in 2001, when the attention of handheld gamers was turning to Game Boy Advance, the adventure of little chick Toki Tori earned rave reviews but failed to fly off the shelves. Now Dutch developer Two Tribes is bringing its signature title to WiiWare, giving players a new chance to discover the action-oriented puzzle game. Though play-control details have not yet been released, screenshots (which display much-improved 3-D graphics) indicate that the game will use the Wii remote's pointing capabilities as one way to guide Toki Tori around the game's 70 side-scrolling levels. The goal is to collect all of the lost eggs in each stage without letting enemies gobble up your feathered friend. As a level begins, you have limited use of as many as 10 items that range from the gap-spanning Bridge Builder to the enemy-eliminating Slug Sucker. If you use an item in the wrong place, you'll likely have to restart the level or use a wildcard (new to the WiiWare version) to get Toki Tori out of the jam. Though most of the WiiWare game's areas were part of the original title, some have been adjusted to make the difficulty more consistent throughout the game, and a handful of new levels have been added. Additionally, the original title's time limits have been removed to give you more time to ponder the challenges. If you're stumped you will be able to ask the advice of other Toki Tori players on the Wii Message Board. —GEORGE S.



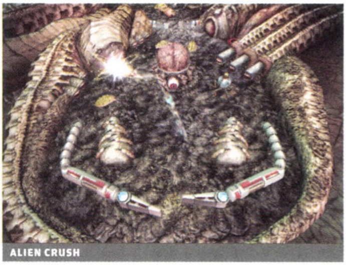




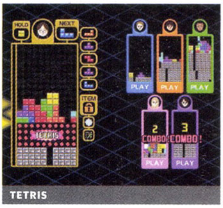
Not only does Toki Tori feature improved graphics, but it's also in widescreen.

Big in Japan

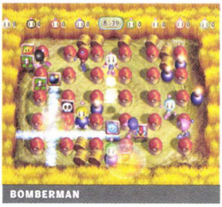
Hudson has major plans for WiiWare in Japan. Take a look at some of the publisher's upcoming overseas offerings.


ALIEN CRUSH

Hudson Soft quickly jumped aboard the WiiWare wagon with its intense (but short) shooter Star Soldier R, but that was only the beginning of what the company has in the pipeline. Hudson recently announced several additional titles headed to WiiWare this summer and beyond—at least, in Japan. Among the titles are several games that should be familiar to North American audiences, including Bomberman (which will support online competition for up to eight players), Tetris (featuring six-player online versus play and two-player co-op), and a 3-D remake of the classic TurboGrafx pinball game Alien Crush (which will offer online leaderboards). Rounding out the list is an aquarium sim called Blue Oasis: Healing Time with Fish, which will somehow utilize data from the Forecast Channel. Although none of these games have been announced for North America as of press time, we're keeping our fingers crossed. —CHRIS H.



TETRIS



BOMBERMAN

Tune in to the Nintendo Channel

Wii users got a pleasant surprise in early May with the launch of the Nintendo Channel—a new channel featuring a wide variety of game-related content, including interviews, game videos, and more. The channel also lets you give your opinions on games you've played, and under the "Find Titles for You" option you can access trial versions of an ever-evolving selection of DS software. You can download the Nintendo Channel for free through the Wii Shop Channel. —CHRIS H.

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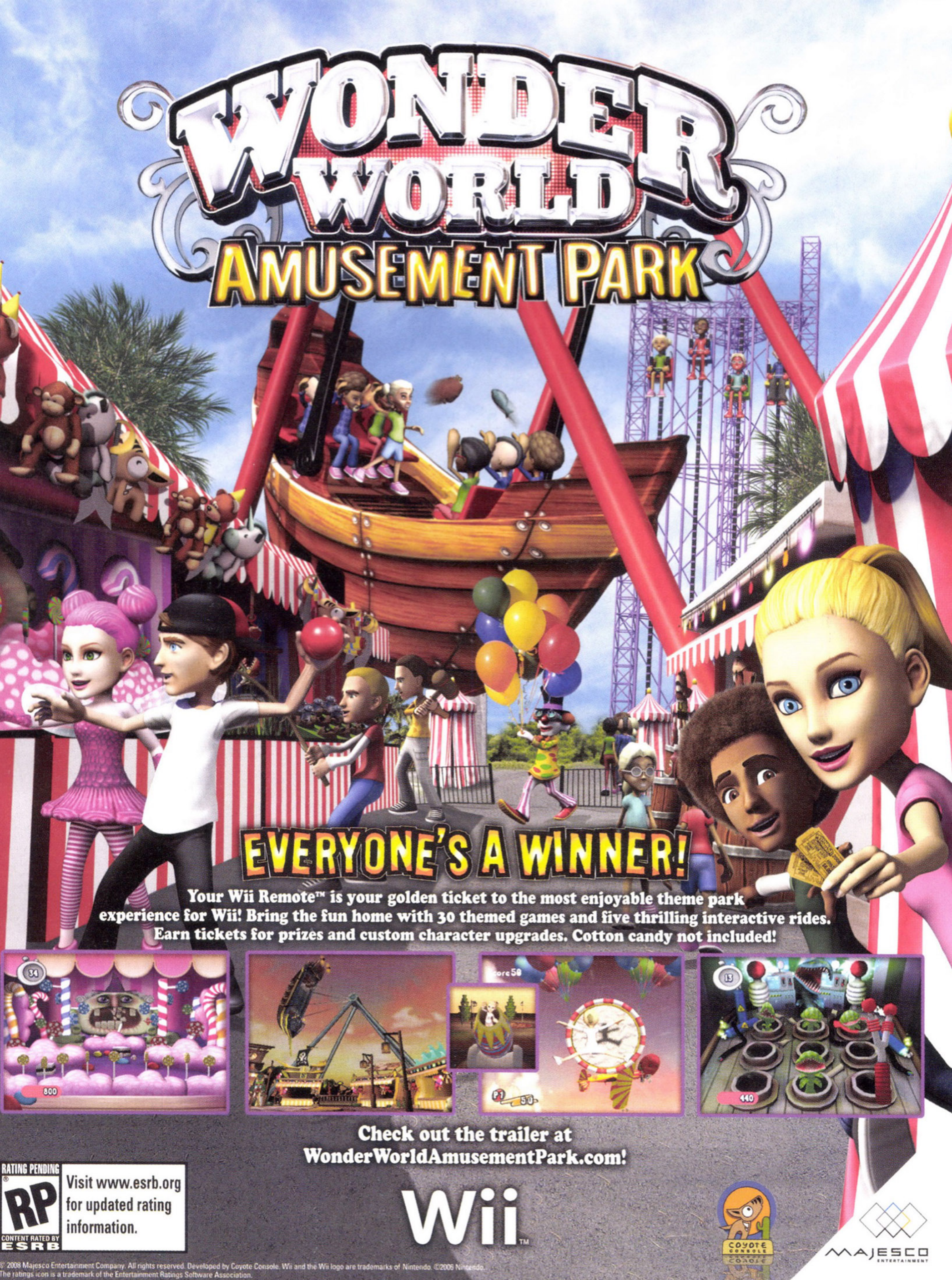
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P1
50
13
440
RATING PENDING
RP
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MAJESCO
ENTERTAINMENT

WONDER WORLD AMUSEMENT PARK

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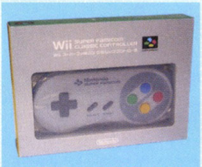
VIRTUAL CONSOLE



SWEET 16 (BITS)

For Japanese Virtual Console fans, there's no better way to play than with this Super Famicom Classic Controller—essentially a Wii-compatible re-release of the controller that came with the overseas equivalent of the Super NES. Unfortunately, it's available only as a special Club Nintendo item in Japan.

WANTED!

This month's poll results don't differ much from last month's, but Mother has climbed from fourth to second place. You gonna take that, Mario and Chrono fans?

READERS' MOST WANTED

1. Earthbound (Super NES)
2. Mother (NES/Japan only)
3. Super Mario RPG: Legend of the Seven Stars (Super NES)
4. Chrono Trigger (Super NES)
5. Tie: The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask (N64)/Super Smash Bros. (N64)

NP STAFF'S MOST WANTED

1. Mega Man: The Wily Wars (Sega Genesis)
2. Terranigma (Super NES)
3. Super Mario All-Stars (Super NES)
4. Super Punch-Out!! (Super NES)
5. Super Mario RPG: Legend of the Seven Stars (Super NES)

What classic games do you want to see come to Virtual Console? Send us up to five picks (only for systems currently represented on Virtual Console) at **vcpoll@futureus.com**. We'll print the results in an upcoming issue. Note: This is for polling purposes only, and will in no way determine future Virtual Console releases.

DOUBLE DRAGON

PLATFORM: NES

PUBLISHER: AKSYS/TRADEWEST

GENRE: ACTION

ORIGINAL RELEASE: 1988

WHAT A port of the mega-hit arcade game, the NES version of Double Dragon lost its co-op gameplay but gained some cool new features such as RPG-style leveling up and more platforming elements, plus an awful versus mode.

WHY Despite the many changes made to the game, it's one of the most satisfying NES beat-'em-ups...at least, until you get to the cheap final level. —CH

FANTASY ZONE

PLATFORM: MASTER SYSTEM

PUBLISHER: SEGA

GENRE: SHOOTER

ORIGINAL RELEASE: 1986

WHAT Originally an arcade game, this surreal, pastel-colored shooter lets you scroll both left and right as you seek out enemy bases. Along the way, you'll gather coins that you can spend to upgrade your ship. Upon destroying all of the bases in each stage, you'll face off against a big, often very strange boss.

WHY After the original Phantasy Star, this is probably the Master System's best game. —ST

MEGA TURRICAN

PLATFORM: SEGA GENESIS

PUBLISHER: FACTOR 5/DATA EAST

GENRE: ACTION

ORIGINAL RELEASE: 1994

WHAT Shooting and platforming combine into an intense action experience in Mega Turrican. This follow-up to Super Turrican lets you use several types of weapons and a grappling hook to lay waste to your cybernetic foes.

WHY Even if you've already downloaded Super Turrican, Mega Turrican's grappling maneuver makes this explosive entry in the series that much deeper and more enjoyable. —CH

Filthy Orakians! Maia will not be yours!

PHANTASY STAR III: GENERATIONS OF DOOM

PLATFORM: SEGA GENESIS

PUBLISHER: SEGA

GENRE: RPG

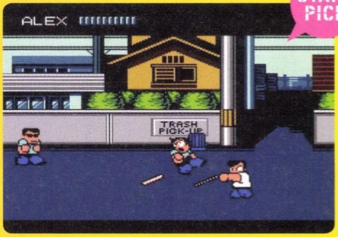
ORIGINAL RELEASE: 1991

WHAT A traditional console RPG (let's hear it for random turn-based battles) with the series' trademark mix of fantasy and sci-fi.

WHY While a bit bland compared to Phantasy Star II, the "generations" aspect is cool: at certain points in the adventure you choose who to marry, then skip years ahead to play as the couple's offspring. —CS

VIRTUAL CONSOLE SPOTLIGHT

STAFF PICK



RIVER CITY RANSOM

PLATFORM: NES · **PUBLISHER:** AKSYS/TECHNOS

GENRE: ACTION · **ORIGINAL RELEASE:** 1990

Justin C's Pick

When Cyndi is kidnapped by the nefarious Slick, high-schoolers Alex and Ryan (Cyndi's boyfriend) must punch and kick their way through the gang-filled streets of River City. A basic plot, sure, but River City Ransom is deeper than it seems. It's a beat-'em-up like Double Dragon, but it also has RPG elements: you can purchase new moves or stat-altering items for Alex and Ryan to make them strong enough to defeat the numerous tough baddies. But it's the cooperative-play option that makes River City Ransom a definite must-buy.

STAFF PICK

POKÉMON PUZZLE LEAGUE

PLATFORM: NINTENDO 64

PUBLISHER: NINTENDO

GENRE: PUZZLE

ORIGINAL RELEASE: 2000

WHAT A puzzler that plays like Tetris Attack for the Super NES and Pokémon Puzzle Challenge for Game Boy Color: as blocks rise from the bottom, you shift them left or right to match three to five of the same color in horizontal or vertical rows.

WHY The action is nearly as superbly simple as Tetris, making the game an addictive thumb-twitcher that can be played mostly on instinct. —CS

RENEGADE

PLATFORM: NES

PUBLISHER: AKSYS/TAITO

GENRE: ACTION

ORIGINAL RELEASE: 1988

WHAT Punch, kick, throw, and otherwise pummel your way though an army of enemy gangs in a port of the coin-op game of the same name. You get to ride a motorcycle, too.

WHY Renegade may have been released the same year as Double Dragon, but it isn't even in the same league. The fighting feels squishy, and the character sprites and music are just plain goofy. Still, brawler fans might get a mild kick out of it. —CH

THERE'S NO TIME TO LOSE... EACH TIME THE CLOCKTOWER RINGS, THE PEOPLE OF THIS TOWN LOSE THEIR MEMORIES. ONLY BY EXPLORING DANGEROUS, EVER-CHANGING DUNGEONS CAN CHOCOBO AND HIS ALLIES RESTORE WHAT HAS BEEN TAKEN AWAY.
8F
Lv 13
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Lv 21
HP 236/236
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THIS MONTH IN PREVIEWS

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How He Roles

>SONIC CHRONICLES: THE DARK BROTHERHOOD

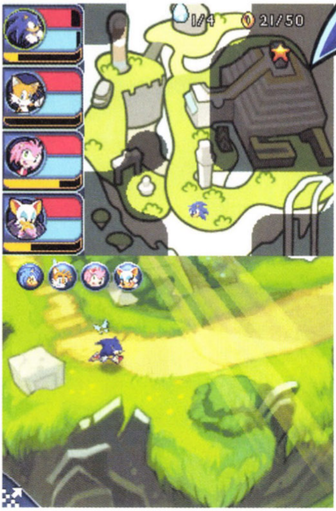
PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
DEVELOPER: **BIOWARE** • RELEASE: **Q3 2008**

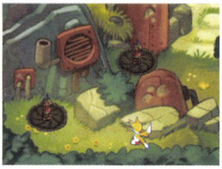
According to the Chinese calendar 2008 is the year of the rat, but in the realm of video games it might be the year of the hedgehog.

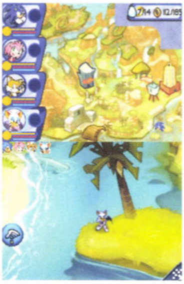
If you caught our February cover story, then you already know that Sonic Chronicles is a true-blue RPG with all the trappings you'd expect from the genre: multicharacter battle parties, menu-driven combat, nonplayable characters to interact with, shops at which you can spend those fabulous golden rings, and vast worlds to explore. The Sonic games have yielded quite the menagerie of characters over the years, and you'll be able to take control of many of them in Sonic Chronicles, including Sonic himself, Tails, Knuckles, Big the Cat, Amy, Shadow, and Rouge. In combat, each character has his or her own strengths and abilities; Sonic's speed lets him attack multiple times in one turn, for example. During exploration, characters have additional talents: Amy can smash through obstacles with her giant mallet, for instance, and Knuckles can climb certain walls. As your characters earn experience and level up, their skills will improve and expand, and you'll be able to raise their stats as you see fit.

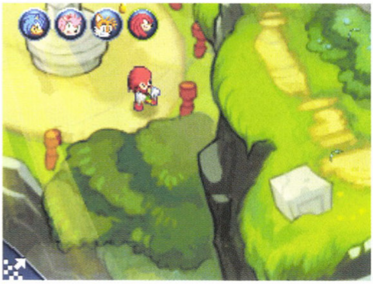
You'll also be able to enhance your characters by using those cute, cuddly Chaos that have been hanging around Sonic and pals for years. When you first find a Chao it will be in egg form, but after a few minutes it will hatch, enabling you to equip it to gain new powers such as improved defense, increased attack strength, or advantages against specific enemies. You'll need them, too. Not only must you battle Dr. Robotnik's (aka Eggman's) forces, but those of a mysterious new foe as well.

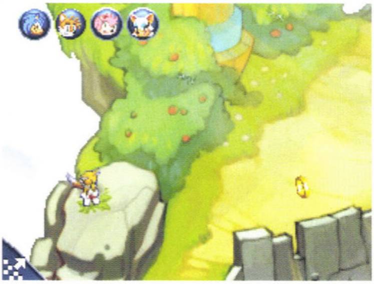
When you're not fighting, you'll spend a good deal of time conversing with party members and NPCs, and, true to form, developer BioWare has included plenty of dialogue options, ranging from the ordinary to the inquisitive to the snarky. You've always wanted to tell Amy to shut her pie hole—now's your chance! If that's not reason enough to get excited, then consider the fact that you'll get to revisit familiar Sonic locales (such as the Green Hill Zone from Sonic 1 and Angel Island from Sonic 3) and explore them in all-new ways. It may not have blast processing, but The Dark Brotherhood promises to deliver a Sonic experience unlike any that's come before. —CHRIS H.

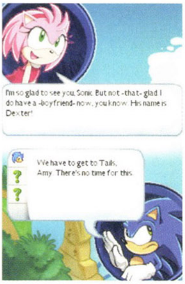












I'm so glad to see you, Sonic. But not -that- glad. I do have a -boyfriend- now, you know. His name is Dexter!

We have to get to Tails, Amy. There's no time for this.

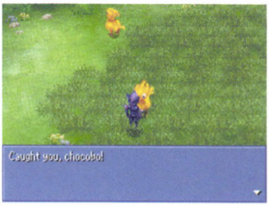
The Dark Knight Returns

>FINAL FANTASY IV

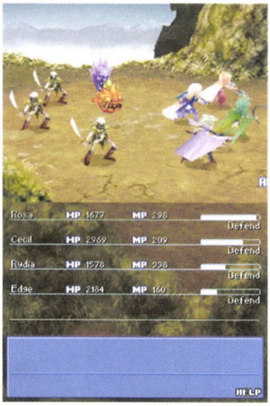
PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **SQUARE ENIX**
DEVELOPER: **SQUARE ENIX/MATRIX** • RELEASE: **JULY 2008**

Remember Cecil, the dark knight of Baron with a secret past? How about Rydia, the small-town girl capable of summoning ancient beasts? And who can forget Edward, the "spoony" bard? The cast of the Super NES classic Final Fantasy IV came to life through a dramatic, unforgettable story, but their pixely appearance left the visual effects of clashing swords and summoned monsters mostly to the imagination. Until now, that is. FFIV is being rebuilt for DS from the ground up, complete with 3-D graphics and cut-scenes to support one of the greatest video-game tales ever told.

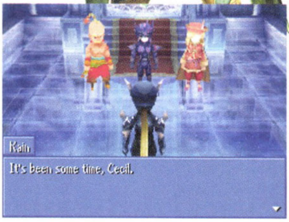
But don't expect the same game with pretty graphics. As we discussed in our May issue, Square Enix has added a handful of new features, including the ability to transfer a departing character's skill to another character, and the integration of new story segments that were cut from the original way back in 1991. Whether you're a newcomer or a fan of the original, FFIV for DS is not to be missed. —**LEON K.**



Caught you, chocobo!



Rosa HP 1677 MP 298 Defend
Cecil HP 2969 MP 209 Defend
Rydia HP 1578 MP 338 Defend
Edge HP 2184 MP 160 Defend
HELP



Kain

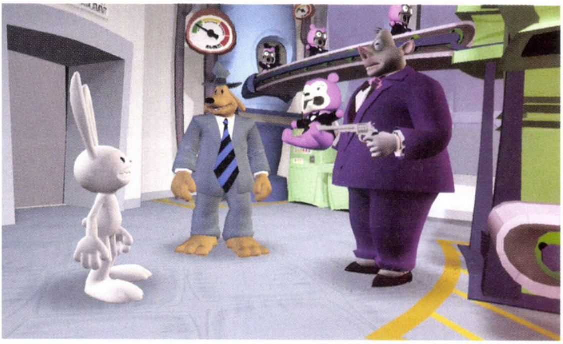
It's been some time, Cecil.

Cops & Critters

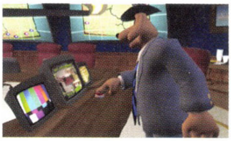
>SAM & MAX SEASON ONE

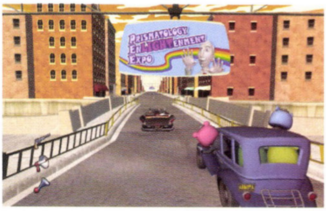
PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **THE ADVENTURE COMPANY**
DEVELOPER: **TELLTALE GAMES** • RELEASE: **FALL 2008**

Freelance police Sam (he's the straight-edge dog) and Max (he's the psychotic bunny) have been sleuthing around for more than a decade, but their Wii release this fall will mark the duo's debut on a home video game console. And the pair couldn't have picked a better place to land—their comedic point-and-click adventures translate perfectly to the Wii's controls. As you might expect, you move the cursor with the Wii remote, interact with objects by pressing the A Button, and scroll through your inventory and dialogue choices with the Control Pad. The partners' Season One mission spans six separate episodes (all tied together with an overarching story involving a mind-control plot), in which you'll visit wacky locales (including a tattoo parlor, a psychotherapy clinic, and the local convenience store), pull over suspects, obtain items, and use conversation trees to play good cop/bad cop with a number of characters (including the rat living in Sam & Max's office). The game features several enhancements over the original PC version, such as an improved interface and a run button. —**CHRIS H.**



[Above] It's the ultimate battle! A dog and a rabbit versus a...what the heck is that? A mole, maybe? Whatever he is, he's got a spiffy purple suit.





World War 2.5

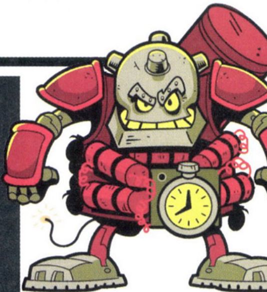
>ROBOCALYPSE

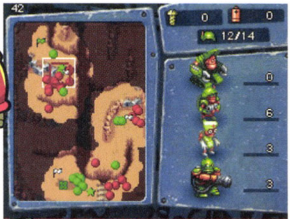
PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **TBD**
DEVELOPER: **VOGSTER** • RELEASE: **FALL 2008**

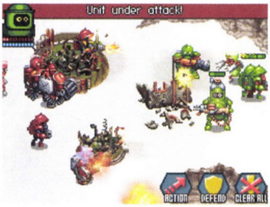
When robots run amok, boy genius Myron Mako creates his own army of fighting machines to save the day in Vogster's DS debut, Robocalypse, a real-time strategy title that lets you tap your way to victory on the touch screen. Myron's robots have the fighting instincts of household appliances at first (toasters to be specific), so he scans the brains of seasoned World War II vets to give the mechs more-heroic tendencies. If it seems that the developers aren't going for ripped-from-the-headlines realism, it's true. Robocalypse's plot is played out for laughs and its characters are painted with broad strokes, from buxom blonde Flaxen Hayer and red-faced boss Mr. Yellin to the Demolisher, a mean machine with world domination in mind. The robots spout Schwarzenegger-worthy one-liners as they blast each other on battlefields whose names play off the titles of war movies: The Gear Hunter, Ice Station Reboot, and All Rusty on the Alien Front, to name a few. The graphic style, especially that of the between-mission cut-scenes, also has comic flair.

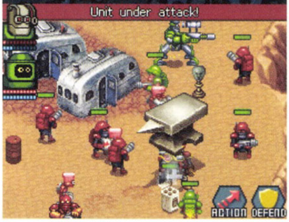
Though the atmosphere is light, the game has the strategy elements of a hardcore sim. You send construction 'bots out to collect scrap metal and batteries so you can build factories and combatants, then you assign the fighters to protect your interests or launch an all-out attack on multiple fronts. If your forces are spread too thin, you'll have to call them back to your base or risk being wiped out. Mechanical Medics offer energy boosts to injured troops. Grunt soldiers are fast, but can be outgunned easily if stranded. More-advanced soldiers move slower but pack extra heat. The most powerful fighters are Heroes (the ones with the brainwaves of vets), who have advanced weapons and special abilities. Squad leader Sergeant Payne sports the boxing-glove-modeled Head Cracker and rallies the troops with his War Cry. Joe Commando sends enemy parts flying with his Dual Chain Guns and Rampage ability. Spyder Scout slips by enemies with Stealth mode and turns them into harmless refrigerators by using his Converter Gun.

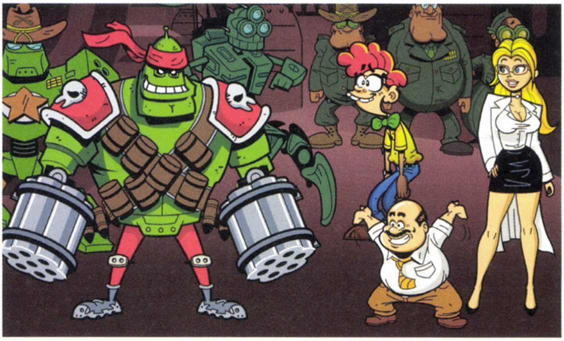
Play control is as easy as pulling a trigger. You tap a unit to get its attention, give it marching orders (if needed), then tap the destination. The unit's fellow warriors will follow unless they have their own instructions. The default display on the touch screen is a zoomed-in view of the field, but you can switch to a full view to send your units to the far edges of the world. The single-player story mode (written by *SpongeBob SquarePants* writer-director Jay Lender and Destroy All Humans: Big Willy Unleashed writer Micah Wright) takes you through 17 comedic missions. Multiplayer mode invites up to four players to have it out in cooperative or competitive play using a local wireless connection. —GEORGE S.



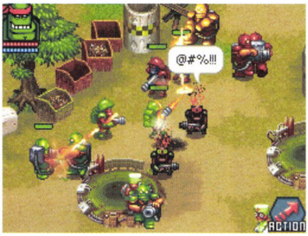


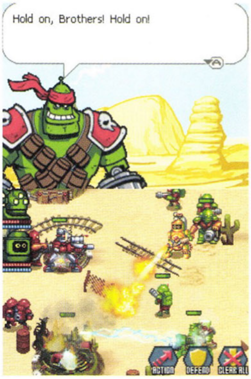

Unit under attack!

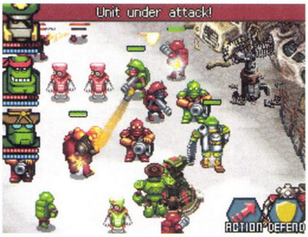

Unit under attack!

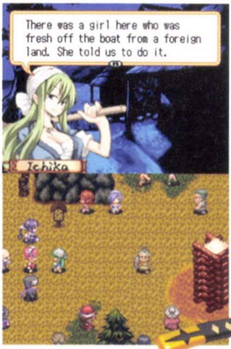


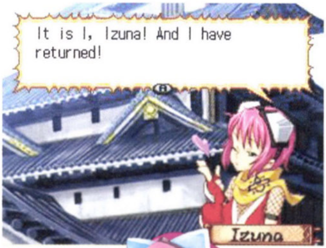
[Above] An unlikely human trio commands the cybernetic armies of Robocalypse. The crew consists of dorky Myron Mako, buxom Flaxen Hayer, and the boss, Mr. Yellin.

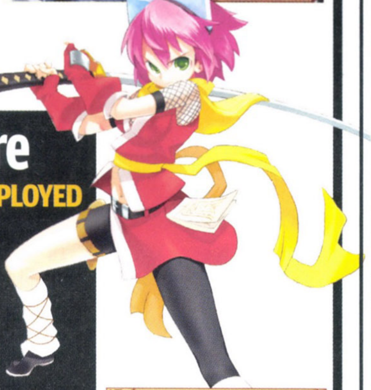



Hold on, Brothers! Hold on!


Unit under attack!


There was a girl here who was fresh off the boat from a foreign land. She told us to do it.
Ichika


It is I, Izuna! And I have returned!
Izuna

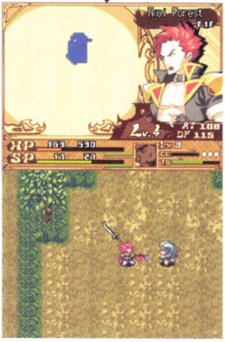


Ninja for Hire

> IZUNA 2: THE UNEMPLOYED NINJA RETURNS

PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **ATLUS**
DEVELOPER: **SUCCESS** • RELEASE: **JULY 2008**

Impertinent, irresponsible, irrepressible ninja gal Izuna just can't catch a break—a year later and she's still wandering the land with her ninja cohorts, unable to find a job. That's bad news for her (although she seems to enjoy the freeloading lifestyle), but good news for fans of dungeon-crawling RPGs. Following in the path of the original Izuna (and, by extension, games like Pokémon Mystery Dungeon and Shiren the Wanderer), Izuna 2: The Unemployed Ninja Returns is all about exploring randomly generated dungeons and using a wide assortment of items and combat skills to vanquish enemies in pseudo-turn-based combat. As in the first Izuna, irreverent writing and a quirky story supplement the action—this time Izuna's helping her partner Shino seek out her long-lost sister—but unlike that game, Izuna 2 features deeper gameplay, including a tag-team system that lets you bring two characters into a dungeon, allowing for more strategy and special combo attacks. Sure beats looking for a real job. —CHRIS H.


Ikoi Forest
B1F
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AT 108
DF 115
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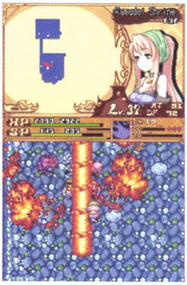
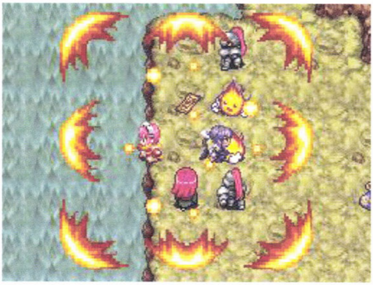
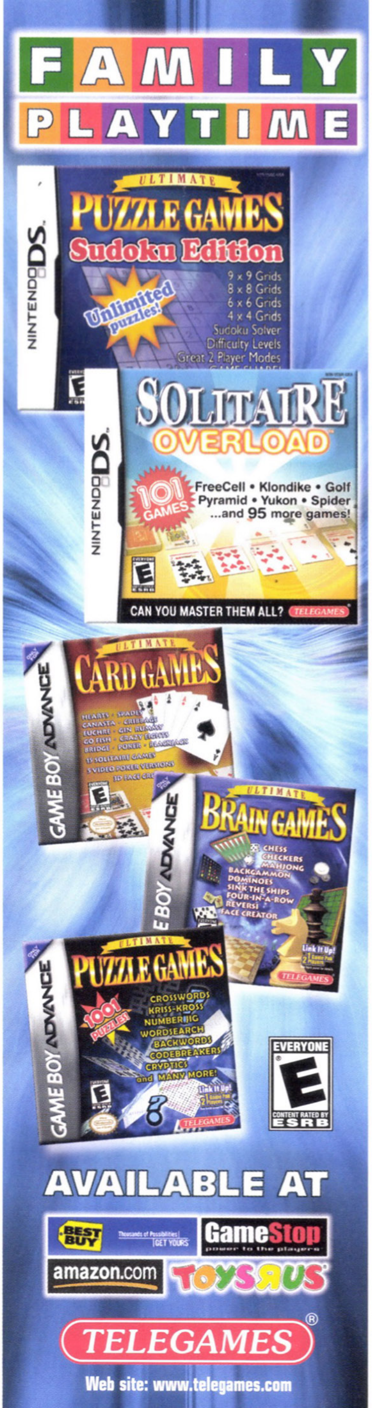
SP 17 27
Lv 3
CC
TG



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Transformation Jutsu!

>NARUTO: CLASH OF NINJA REVOLUTION 2

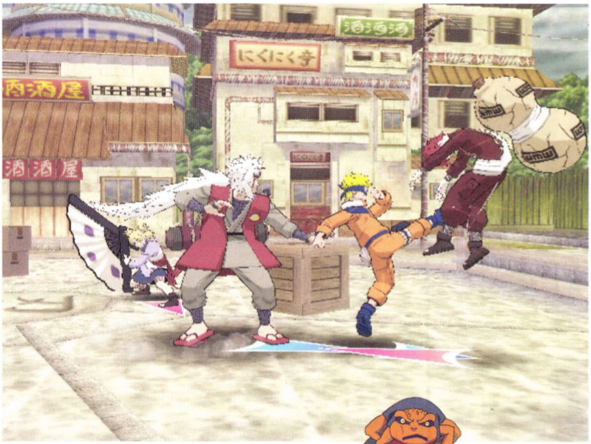
PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **TOMY**
DEVELOPER: **EIGHTING** • RELEASE: **FALL 2008**

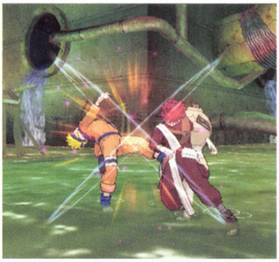
Last year's Naruto: Clash of Ninja Revolution was a solid fighter, bringing the fast-paced fighting action of the series to Wii, although it lacked the improvements and new features that many players had hoped for. It seems that developer Eighting and publisher Tomy listened to the fans, because Clash of Ninja Revolution 2 looks to make significant strides.

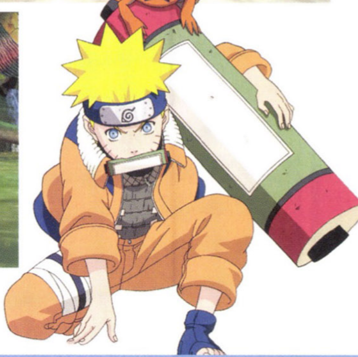
One thing we loved about the first Clash of Ninja Revolution was the fact that it wasn't a straight port of the Japanese version of the game—the story and roster were completely redone for an American audience. Now that approach has been taken a step further: Revolution 2 is a totally brand-new title developed specifically for an American audience. Though the game is not set after the series' time jump, the story is completely original and takes place after Sasuke has left the Hidden Leaf Village to train with Orochimaru, so the roster will be up-to-date with where the television show is in America. Since the plot is original, the Story mode should be enjoyable even to longtime fans of the anime. Though details on new characters are slim, fan favorites Choji and Kiba have been confirmed as being in the game. Choji, though slow, boasts powerful attacks and the ability to expand parts of his body, while Kiba uses his agility and canine companion Akamaru to beat down opponents. The developers have stated that one of their goals for this entry is to create distinctly different characters, and from the sound of it, they're well on their way.

In addition to making a story and character roster tailored to an American audience, the developers have listened to players' complaints about the first game, and have worked to make improvements. Two changes we're excited to see are a rebalancing of all the characters to provide a more level playing field, and the addition of options that allow the player to control the environmental settings, like the appearance of breakable objects and stage transitions that sometimes got in the way of the action in the first Revolution title.

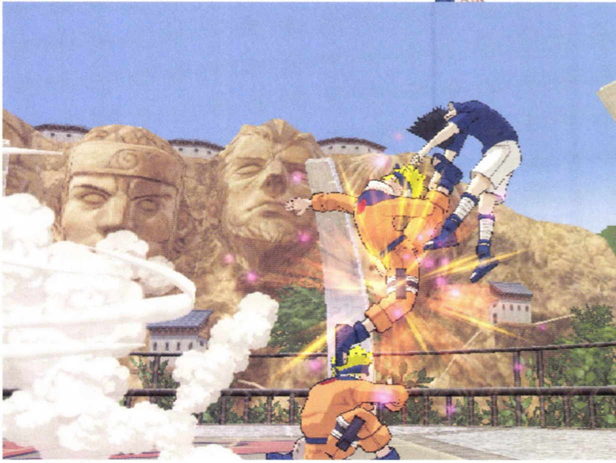
Though we don't yet know whether Revolution 2 will feature play over Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection, we have learned that it will include unspecified changes and additions to the Wii controls. Rarely do game makers take players' comments so seriously, and even when they do it almost never results in the degree of change evident in Revolution 2—only the core fighting system will be unchanged for this sequel. Revolution 2 may just be the ultimate Naruto fighting game. —TOM H.

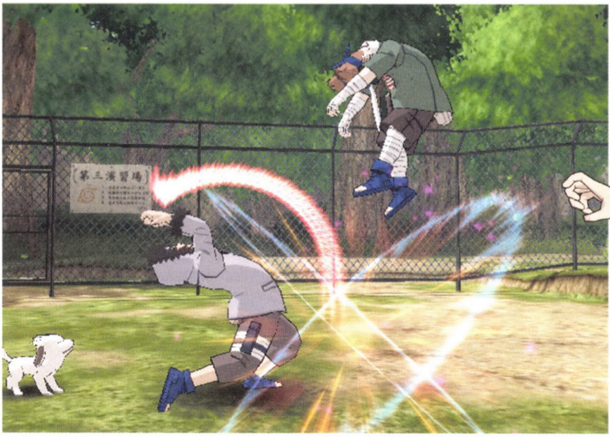


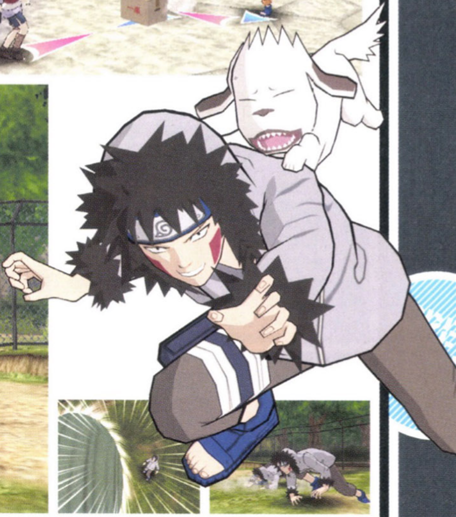


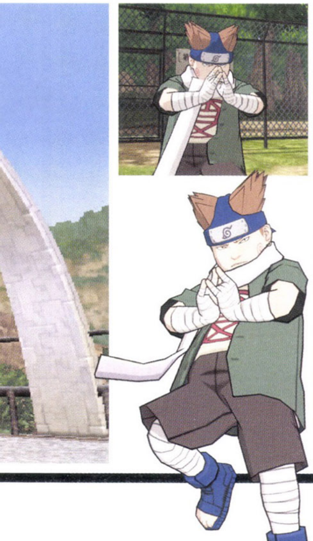


As expected, the graphics look pretty close to the anime series. Unlike current episodes, however, the game still uses the old character designs.









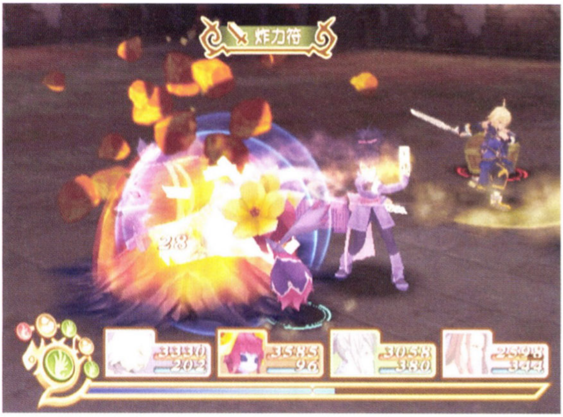
Choji and Kiba are two new additions to the game—odd since they've been in the anime series for a while now, but we'll take as many characters as we can get.

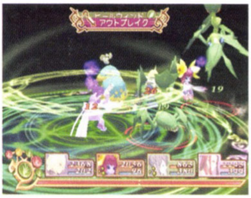
Brave New World

> TALES OF SYMPHONIA: DAWN OF THE NEW WORLD

PLATFORM: **Wii** • PUBLISHER: **NAMCO BANDAI**
DEVELOPER: **NAMCO TALES STUDIO** • RELEASE: **WINTER 2008**

Despite Wii's world-conquering popularity, there's a distinct lack of big-name RPGs for the platform. That's finally set to change this winter when the sequel to the GameCube's biggest role-playing adventure—Tales of Symphonia—comes exclusively to Nintendo's little white console. Since we last visited Dawn of the New World in Volume 226, additional details have emerged regarding the game's new monster-recruitment system. During battle, an elemental grid appears in the lower-left corner of the screen, and whenever you use an elemental arte the corresponding icon appears in one of the slots surrounding the grid. The element that fills the most slots determines the battlefield's alignment, represented by the big icon in the middle. If you can match the battlefield's alignment to that of a monster, you'll have a chance to catch the beast and add it to your party. Another tidbit for Tales devotees: the ultra-flashy Mystic Artes (better known to fans as Hi-Ougis) return for Dawn of the New World, allowing you to dish out the ultimate beatdown. —STEVE T.



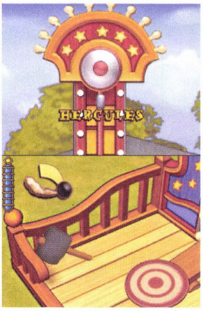


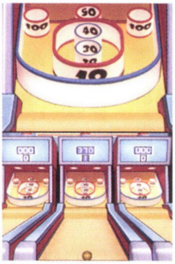
Thrills, No Spills

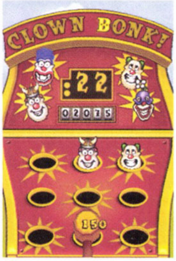
> CARNIVAL GAMES

PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **2K PLAY**
DEVELOPER: **CAT DADDY GAMES** • RELEASE: **SUMMER 2008**

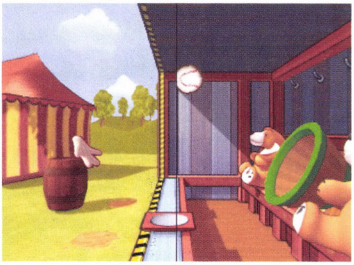
2K Play's DS iteration of its popular Carnival Games series gives you all of the fun of walking the midway without getting your hands sticky from cotton candy or coming into contact with the guy who lives in the shed out next to the Tilt-A-Whirl. Some of the title's 20 minigames—Alley Ball, Dunk Tank, and Frog Leap, to name a few—are updates from last year's Wii release. Others, such as RC Raceway, Clown Bonk, and Bumper Boats are new and exclusive to the DS game. Though a few attractions are controlled via the control pad and buttons, most take advantage of the handheld's touch screen (such as tapping to fire in the shooting gallery) or microphone (for blowing bubbles or talking to the Great Swami, for example). As you score points you'll win tickets and prizes, including a number of outfits and accessories for your character, such as gorilla feet, a dragon mask, a pirate's hat, a guitar, and even a ninja sword. If you can't get out to the amusement park this summer or if carnies give you the willies, you can get a taste of carnival life in small doses with this playful minigame collection. —GEORGE S.



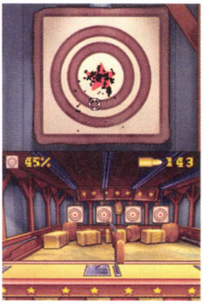




From tests of strength to tests of skill, Carnival Games features a wide variety of attractions.



In Buckets of Fun, you turn the DS sideways and gently flick the ball from the left screen to the right screen.



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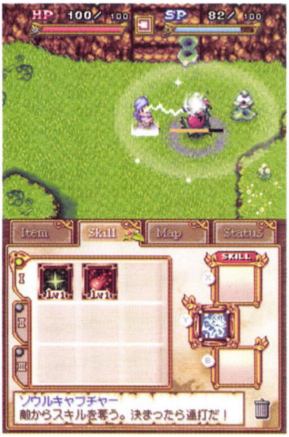
HP 100/100
SP 82/100
Item
Skill
Map
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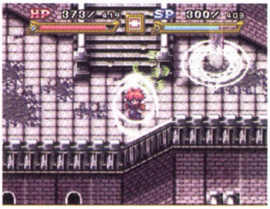
SKILL

ソウルキャプチャー
敵からスキルを奪う。決まったら連打だ！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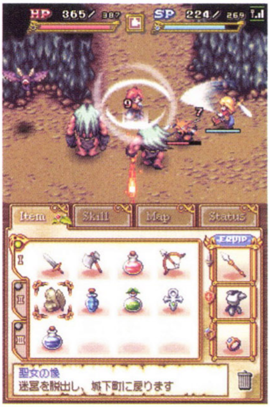

HP 365/387
SP 224/269
Item
Skill
Map
Status
EQUIP

聖女の像
迷宮を脱出し、城下町に戻ります

[Above] Your skills can be set to either X, Y, or B by dragging the skills to the respective buttons with the stylus. [Right] You'll encounter some pretty tough enemies on your adventure, so you might want to bring a friend along.

Journey into the Deep

>FROM THE ABYSS

PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **AKSYS GAMES**
DEVELOPER: **SONIC POWERED** • RELEASE: **FALL 2008**

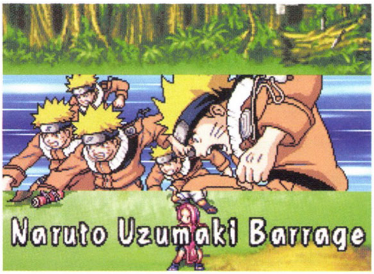
At first glance, From the Abyss is immediately reminiscent of the SNES era of gaming with its colorful 2-D sprites. Beneath its old-school exterior, however, lies a pretty deep (no pun intended) action-RPG. The game starts out simply enough: choose a character, edit his or her appearance, and dive into the randomly generated dungeons. At first, you're armed only with a sword (though you can acquire weapons such as axes and bows later on) and the Soul-Capture spell—but that's really all you'll need. After thrashing a monster with your blade, you can use Soul-Capture to take the enemy's soul (as the name implies) and add the creature's ability to your skill arsenal. And as you're defeating foes, you'll gain status points that are used to improve certain attributes, transforming your character into a tougher fighter or a spellcaster, for example. Don't think you'll have to venture into the abyss on your own, though: you and a friend can team up via local wireless. —JUSTIN C.

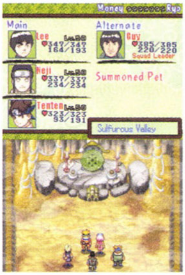
Road Warriors

>NARUTO: PATH OF THE NINJA 2

PLATFORM: **DS** • PUBLISHER: **TOMY**
DEVELOPER: **TOMY** • RELEASE: **SEPTEMBER 2008**

It has been tradition for Naruto games to relay stories first told in the manga and cartoon series. The sequel to DS RPG Naruto: Path of the Ninja, however, chooses the road less traveled by giving us an all-new adventure. Taking place after Sasuke has left Hidden Leaf Village to train with Orochimaru, the game covers the trials of 30 playable characters (a vast improvement over the first Path's six fighters) and offers a rejiggered character-switching scheme that will make it easier to put a team together. The new Squad Leader system passes the strengths of the head ninja on to the rest of the team and the Ninja Tag system pumps up the powers of individual fighters. In turn-based battle your characters can transform into logs by way of the Substitution Jutsu move, making them impervious to attacks while they regroup. The advanced techniques will come in handy both during the adventure and in Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection-enabled battles that will allow Naruto fans to reach across the world and pummel each other. —GEORGE S.


Naruto Uzumaki Barrage


Money
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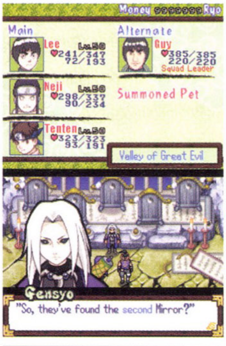
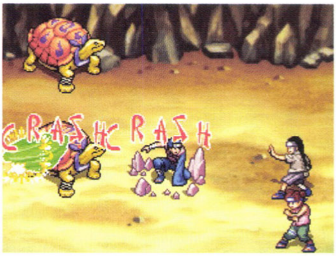
Lee
Guy
Squad Leader
Neji
Summoned Pet
Tenten
Sulfurous Valley


Money
Main
Alternate
Lee Lv.50 241/347 72/193
Guy 385/385 220/220
Squad Leader
Neji Lv.50 298/337 90/234
Summoned Pet
Tenten Lv.50 323/323 93/191
Valley of Great Evil

Gensyo
"So, they've found the second Mirror?"

A lot of the familiar Naruto characters make appearances, but the story is brand new. [Below] Apparently, you'll fight giant ninja turtles. We have no idea if they're teenagers.


CRASH CRASH

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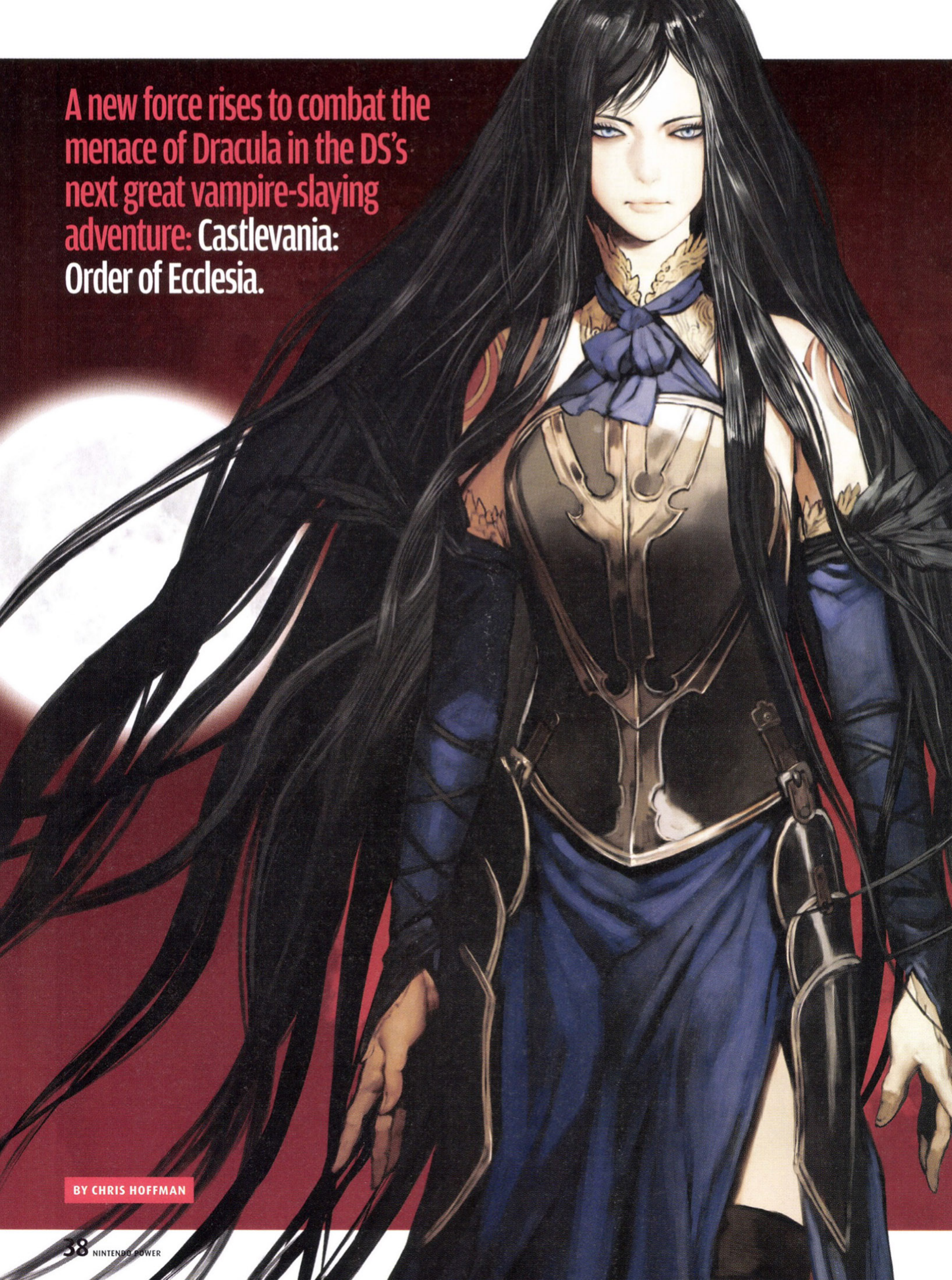


A new force rises to combat the menace of Dracula in the DS's next great vampire-slaying adventure: Castlevania: Order of Ecclesia.

BY CHRIS HOFFMAN

FROM DARKNESS COMES ORDER

Few series in video games carry the respect of Konami's Castlevania; the name alone is enough to send waves of reverence up the spines of hundreds of thousands of players worldwide. For more than 20 years the franchise has been synonymous with the best that gaming has to offer—fantastic graphics, precision gameplay, and a unique world of Gothic horror.

In recent years the Castlevania games have also been synonymous with Nintendo handheld systems, where the series' 2-D roots have been allowed to shine in massive, breathtaking, exploration-laden adventures. This fall, the vampire hunting will commence once again in Castlevania: Order of Ecclesia, which adds some exciting new twists to the familiar formula.

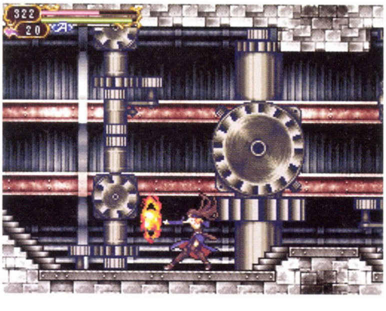
Set at some unspecified time in the mid 1800s (after the events of Castlevania: Symphony of the Night), Order of Ecclesia takes place during the period when the famed Belmont clan went missing and lost the ability to wield the Vampire Killer whip. In the Belmonts' stead, several organizations attempted to gain the power to combat Dracula, but all were unsuccessful until the formation of Ecclesia (a name that translates from Latin as *gathering* or *church*). The secret behind Ecclesia's strength: a dark-haired female warrior named Shanoa. That's right—for the first time since Castlevania Legends hit the Game Boy more than a decade ago, you control a female as the game's sole main character.

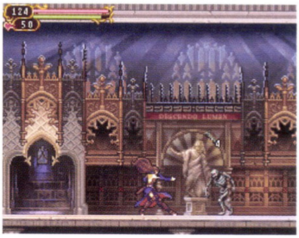
"Yes, this is the first time we have a female as the main character," confirms Castlevania series producer Koji "Iga" Igarashi. "The reason why is because we received many requests from fans to have a female heroine. Another reason is that our designer put a lot of effort in designing the skirt animation for [the enemy creature] Persephone in previous games and we wanted to raise his morale [laughs]."

SYMBOLISM IN THE SHADOWS

The source of Shanoa's—and in turn Ecclesia's—power is the ability to harness the energies of mystical objects called Glyphs. Glyphs come in many forms and offer a wide variety of abilities, but Shanoa is the only one who can wield them; and more than just being integral to the story, the new Glyph system makes some interesting changes to the Castlevania gameplay.

"Basically, there are no actual physical weapons in this game," Iga explains. "The player uses the Glyphs for all attacks by using MP





Clock towers, skeletons...yes, this is the same Castlevania that everybody knows and loves.

[magic points]. With that said, you can use the Glyphs to make things like a sword. These weapons made with Glyphs are made substantial by magic, so every attack consumes MP."

When you come across a Glyph—which may be discovered in an environment, dropped by an enemy, or found by other means—you can make it your own by holding up on the Control Pad for a few seconds: Shanoa lifts her long, flowing locks to reveal a glowing arcane symbol on her back, with which she absorbs the Glyph's power. After you've absorbed an attack Glyph, you can assign it to the Y or X Button as your main or secondary weapon, respectively, and use it in combat similar to how you used weapons in previous Castlevania games. The Confodore Glyph, for example, manifests as a rapier; the Secare Glyph functions as a sword with an arced, overhead attack path; and the Cutlar Glyph provides you with a throwing knife (akin to the reliable dagger subweapon from earlier Castlevanias). Each attack Glyph offers different strength, range, and other attributes, but since you also have to consider its MP consumption, combat now involves an extra layer of strategy: should you wield strong weapons that cost a lot of MP, or is it more important to conserve your magic? Luckily, you won't have to worry about it too much—your MP refills rapidly when you're not attacking.

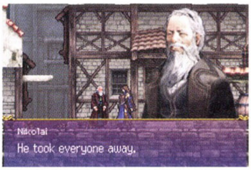
[Right] Shanoa re-creates her favorite level from Strider. Watch out, Grand Master!

By alternating between X and Y, you can string together rapid-fire combo attacks, and if you're particularly fond of one Glyph you can assign it to both buttons for some dual-wielding action. Your choice of equipped Glyphs also determines which Glyph Union special attack you can use (activated by pressing up and an attack button); the union of two Secares sends a huge sword across the screen, while two Cutlars lets you unleash a nonstop barrage of knives, and other combinations promise to be even more potent. Unlike regular attacks, Glyph Unions consume the traditional Castlevania hearts, not MP, so you'll have to slay some enemies or smash open a few candles to replenish your supply.

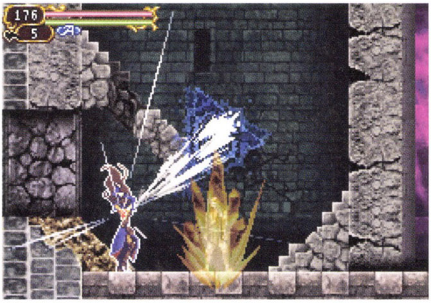
Shanoa can use Glyphs for more than attacking, too. Red ones, as opposed to the usual blue, provide her with noncombat skills, some of which are used automatically and some of which are used by pressing the R Button. One such Glyph, called Magnes, allows Shanoa to create a magnetic field around herself and cling to special metal rods. By then manipulating the field (by pressing a direction on the Control Pad), you can slingshot Shanoa to otherwise-inaccessible areas. Another ability Glyph lets the heroine walk through certain walls. And that's just for starters; the game contains dozens of Glyphs in all.

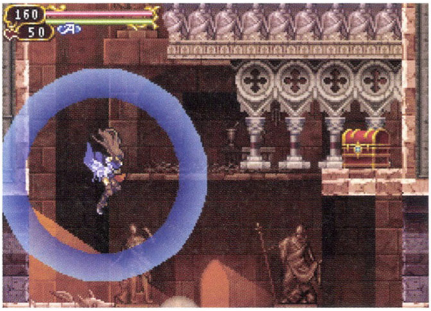
DISORDER OF ECCLESIA

Naturally, you can't have an organization with just one person in it. If Shanoa is the clenched fist of Ecclesia, Barlowe is the mind. As the leader of the order, Barlowe teaches you how to use your abilities at the beginning of the game, and provides you with tips on how to succeed on your quest. Another member of

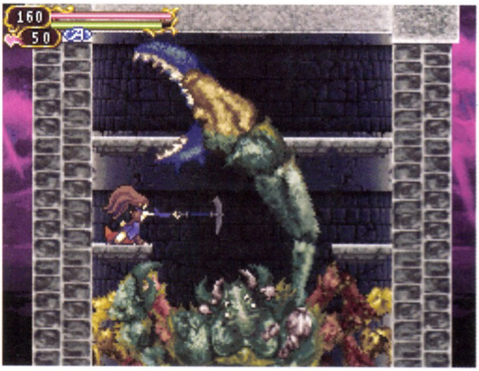

Nikolai
He took everyone away.

[Right] When Shanoa absorbs a Glyph, it's always a flashy spectacle.





[Above] The Magnes Glyph creates a field that lets you cling to certain objects and launch yourself to new areas.



Crab monster...crab monster...tastes like crab, fights like monster. Unlike most Castlevania bosses, this one goes great with garlic butter.

Ecclesia is Albus—a brooding, shotgun-wielding young man (and Barlowe's pupil) who apparently betrays the society at the beginning of the game. Ecclesia's ultimate weapon against Dracula is the supreme Glyph, Dominus, but during a ceremony at the beginning of the game Albus jealously steals it for himself, costing Shanoa her accumulated power and her memory in the process. The nature of Shanoa and Albus's relationship has yet to be revealed, and the same goes for Albus's true motives; in the world of Castlevania not everything is always as it seems.

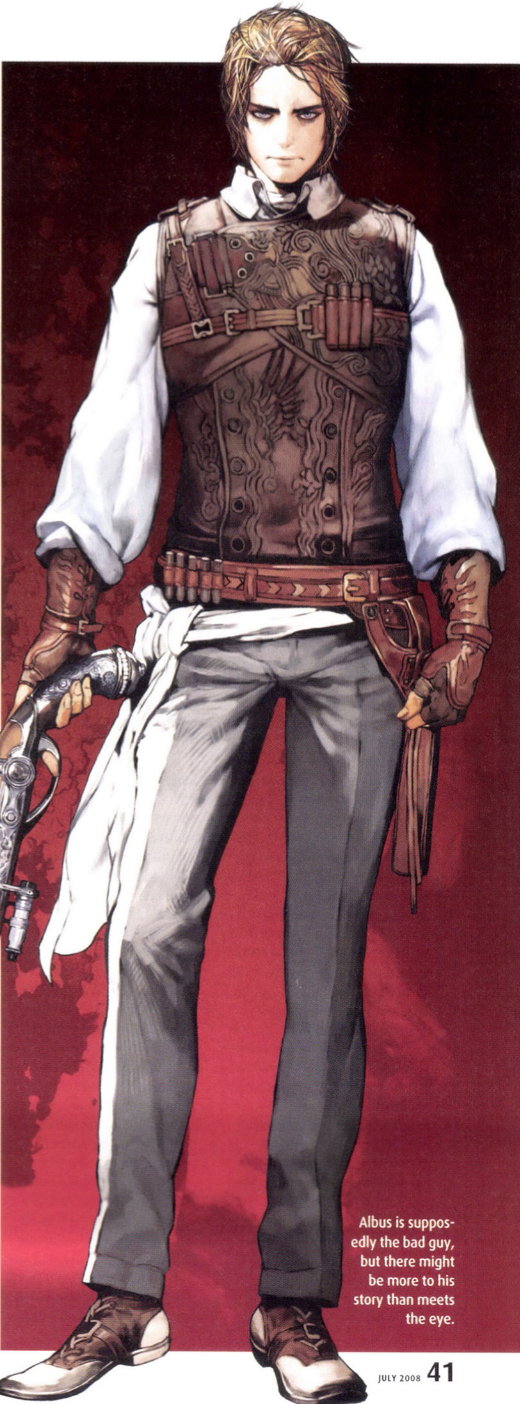
Why Albus stole Dominus may be up for debate, but the fact is that Shanoa must retrieve it, and her mission will take her all over the Transylvanian countryside. Unlike most past Castlevania games, in which the entire adventure took place within a single vast castle, Order of Ecclesia is spread across more than 20 locales connected via a world map. The nonlinear levels include a variety of settings, ranging from traditional castlelike constructs to villages to outdoor environs such as a forest and the seashore.

"We adopted a world map because we wanted to create a feeling of a wide area to explore," states Iga. "Splitting up the areas this way lets us overcome the limits of an interconnected map. In addition, new areas may appear as you find new paths through existing areas."

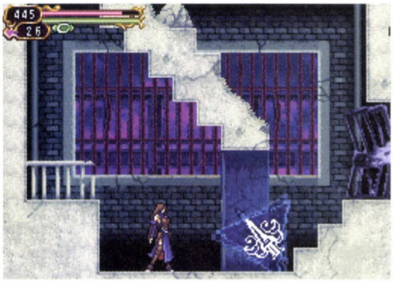
NEW HAUNTS

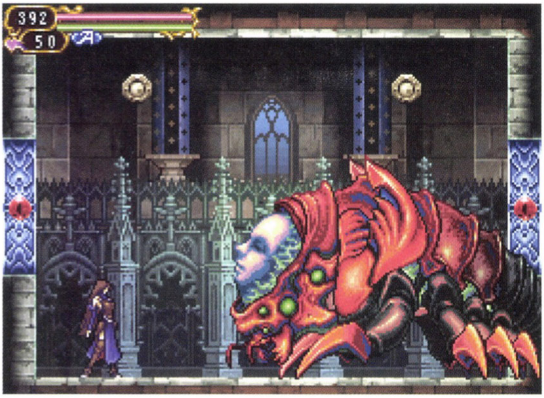
The first area you're likely to experience is the hallowed hall of Ecclesia itself—an ornately decorated, brightly lit cathedral filled with detailed Gothic furniture, lavish portraits, marble sculptures, vaulted ceilings, and walls etched with words such as *Descendo* and *Lumen* (translated as *to descend* and *light*). Ecclesia headquarters is a small area, meant for little more than a tutorial; once it's complete you'll exit to the world map. By using conventional controls or by tapping an icon on the touch screen, you can enter the next stage, an abandoned monastery.

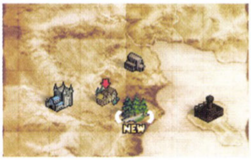
An impressive wooded area featuring layers of trees amidst a beautiful sunset quickly gives way to the monastery itself: a more-typical Castlevania environment with stone-block walls, rubble-strewn floors, and piles of neglected furniture. Dracula's undead army patrols the halls, ranging from the familiar (skeletons, zombies, and bats) to the reinvented (floating ghosts, now in the form of horse heads) to the spine-chillingly new (screaming, bloody-faced banshees that materialize out of thin air). Graphical details, such as decorative wolf heads, bronze balancing scales, fully stocked cupboards, and mysterious devices full of green liquid further add to the



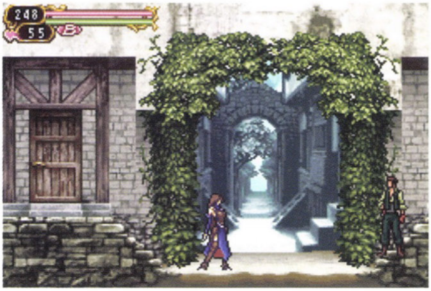
Albus is supposedly the bad guy, but there might be more to his story than meets the eye.







[Left] The new world map makes Transylvania larger and more diverse than ever before.



moody atmosphere. Not surprisingly, the usual Castlevania save statues are also present, as are teleport rooms, which now operate under the guise of large undulating bubbles and overflowing fountains. At the end of the monastery waits Arthroverta, a giant earth beetle with a human face concealed inside its shell; only by using your Glyphs skillfully will you be able to avoid its attacks and defeat it.

As always, you'll be able to gain access to new areas by learning new abilities (primarily via Glyphs), as well as uncover new sections of levels you've already been through. Secrets are hidden everywhere; there are destructible walls leading to unmarked chambers, and by pressing down on the Control Pad you may discover a concealed treasure chest containing a new item, accessory, or piece of armor. You'll also have the opportunity to go on a variety of side quests given to you by rescued villagers. The game conveniently keeps track of villager data in a menu, and the citizens will reward you once you've completed their tasks. We don't have any official confirmation, but we're guessing that the meowing kitty-cat we picked up in the monastery is one of the side-quest objectives.

THE DEVIL IS IN THE DETAILS

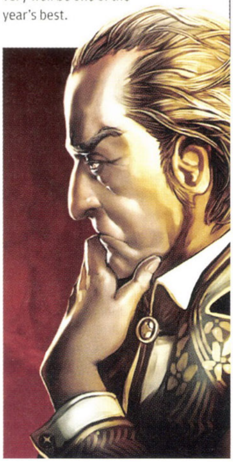
To accompany the new gameplay systems and game structure, Order of Ecclesia also features a new look. Although the classic side-view, 2-D gameplay doesn't appear much different from before, the anime-style character designs and illustrations have been replaced with a more mature, somber, painterly aesthetic.

"We decided to change the art style," comments Iga, "because the style of the previous two DS games was not well received, and we felt that [Symphony of the Night character designer] Ms. [Ayame] Kojima's style does not fit well for DS users very much. Therefore, we decided to use a new illustrator named Masaki."

The visuals are also receiving extra punch thanks to more-detailed animations (not that previous Castlevania games were slouches in this department) and a specially created design tool that allowed the dev team to include an increased number of multisegmented enemies. As for the game's sound, composer Michiru Yamane (who worked on Symphony of the Night and most of the GBA and DS entries in the series) is once again onboard to bring Castlevania's haunting yet catchy melodies to life.

Though none of the characters from earlier Castlevania games are returning (except for Dracula, of course), plenty of elements will be recognizable to veteran players. You'll still level up your character, RPG-style, by earning experience points, you'll still use the L Button to perform an evasive dodge, and you'll still press Select to toggle between a map or character stats on the DS's upper screen. Other traditional features—including a hard difficulty setting and multiple endings—are being implemented specifically for hardcore Castlevania fans. The Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection content introduced in Portrait of Ruin returns as well, with refinements to make it even better: the timed versus competitions will factor how much damage you receive and what items you use into determining the winner, and online item-trading will offer an improved interface that allows each player to have his or her own shop.

Regardless of the game's extra trappings—and there *are* additional features we can't yet discuss—at its heart lies a tried-and-true formula of Gothic action, adventure, and exploration. Years of expertise have allowed Igarashi and his team to create a game that handles incredibly well with its traditional controls (touch-screen interaction is used only for maps and non-action functions), and the expanded game world should allow for one of the grandest entries the series has seen. Castlevania: Order of Ecclesia may very well be one of the year's best.



Barlowe, the head of Ecclesia, strokes his chin and contemplates how awesome his game will be.

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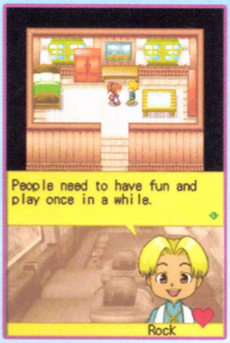
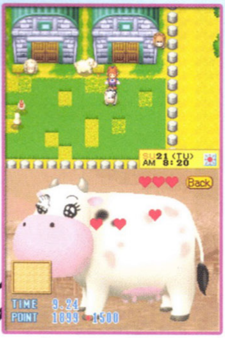
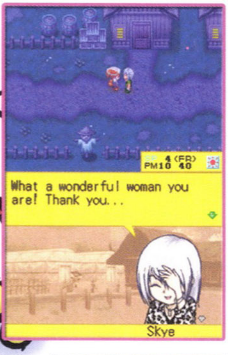
Forget-Me-Not Valley has lost its magic! It's up to you to bring it back by planting crops, raising livestock, and starting a family!


People need to have fun and play once in a while.

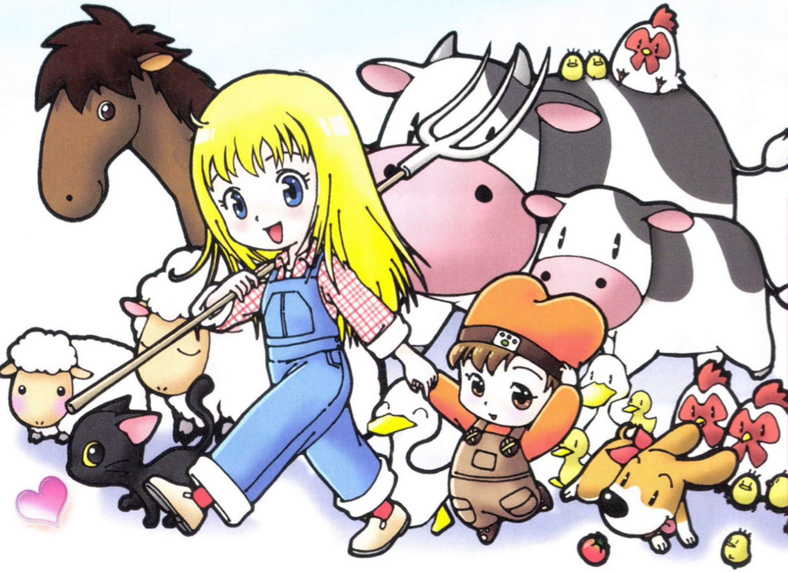
Rock





What a wonderful woman you are! Thank you...

Skye



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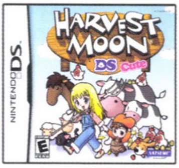

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KOJI'S CASTLE

The unique setting, memorable characters, and timeless gameplay have kept me addicted to the Castlevania series for well over two decades. I simply love the world of Castlevania, and that's why I still play these games even today as producer of the series. I just can't get enough of it! We've been able to enjoy consistent success with the series for a while now, so I must give thanks to the many talented people that have worked with me to create the modern age of Castlevania—the development team, artist Ayami Kojima, and composer Michiru Yamane. All together, we're able to create something new in this classic series time and again.

—KOJI "IGA" IGARASHI, CASTLEVANIA SERIES PRODUCER

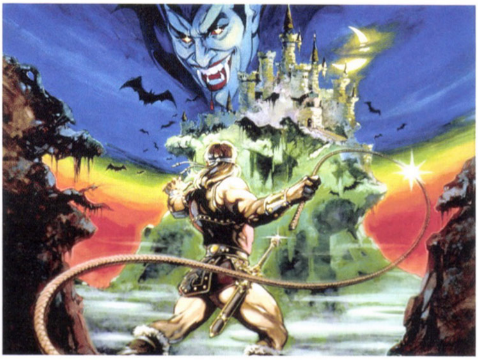
Koji Igarashi

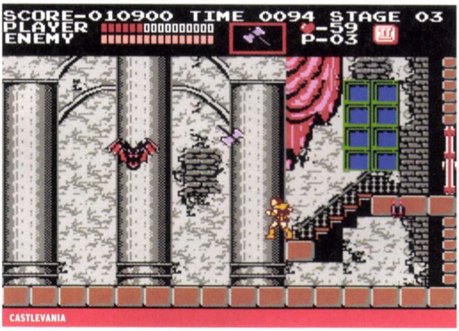
If there's one man responsible for the success of Castlevania, it's Koji Igarashi. Although Iga wasn't part of the original Castlevania development team, he was a huge fan of the franchise (especially Castlevania III: Dracula's Curse), and after joining Konami in 1990, he jumped at the chance to work on the series starting with the acclaimed Castlevania: Symphony of the Night. Since becoming the series' producer, Iga has kept Castlevania going strong with every release. There's no one more qualified to comment on 20-plus years of Castlevania.

NES CASTLEVANIA

CASTLEVANIA 1987
CASTLEVANIA II: SIMON'S QUEST 1988
CASTLEVANIA III: DRACULA'S CURSE 1990

These are the legendary old-school titles in the Castlevania series that paved the way for everything else. I actually didn't own a home console when these games were coming out, so I have fond memories of playing with friends at their homes. As a game creator, I'm consistently overwhelmed at how much the Castlevania teams of that era got out of the hardware to produce such lavish production values.





CASTLEVANIA

CASTLEVANIA II: SIMON'S QUEST

CASTLEVANIA II: SIMON'S QUEST

GAME BOY CASTLEVANIA

THE CASTLEVANIA ADVENTURE 1989
CASTLEVANIA II: BELMONT'S REVENGE 1991
CASTLEVANIA LEGENDS 1998

Aside from Castlevania Legends, all of these titles were made well before I joined Konami. The first two titles were a little on the difficult side, especially for a handheld, but are still well-made games. Legends remains something of an embarrassment for the series. If only that development team had the guidance of the original team on the series!

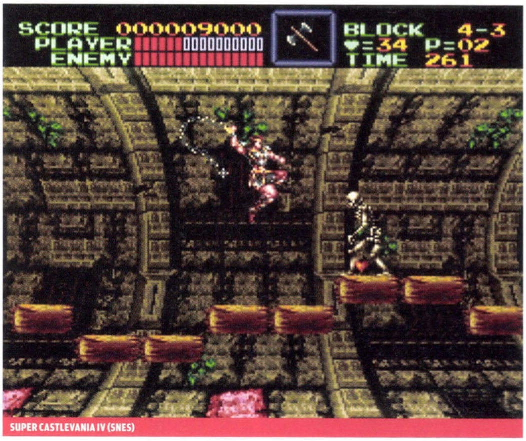
CASTLEVANIA LEGENDS

P
E
♥-12
TIME-591
CASTLEVANIA II: BELMONT'S REVENGE

16-BIT CASTLEVANIA

SUPER CASTLEVANIA IV (SNES) 1991
DRACULA X: RONDO OF BLOOD (PC ENGINE SUPER CD) 1993
CASTLEVANIA BLOODLINES (GENESIS) 1994
CASTLEVANIA: DRACULA X (SNES) 1995

I hold fond feelings for these titles, as I was very close with their development teams when I first started with Konami. Dracula X is a landmark game in the series—it made so many bold changes that we still follow to this day. I like to consider this period the "Castlevania Renaissance." Composer Michiru Yamane, an integral part of the current Castlevania team, joined the series with Castlevania Bloodlines.



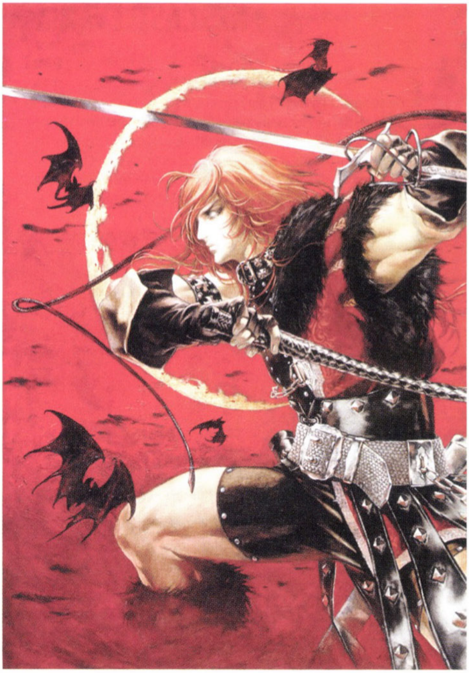
SUPER CASTLEVANIA IV (SNES)

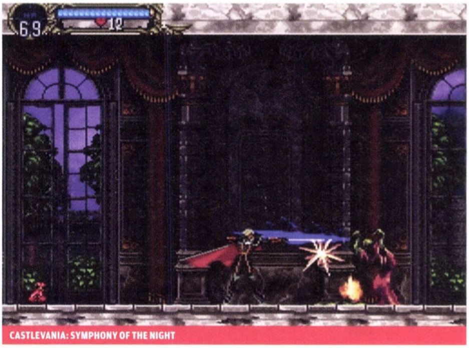
CASTLEVANIA: DRACULA X (SNES)

PS1 CASTLEVANIA

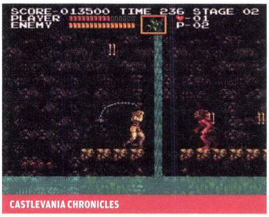
CASTLEVANIA: SYMPHONY OF THE NIGHT 1997
CASTLEVANIA CHRONICLES 2001

Now we're talking—these are all my titles! I was so involved on these games, it's hard to sum up my thoughts in just a few sentences, but both of them had very different development goals. Symphony of the Night was created with the intention of broadening the appeal of the series. As it started as something of a side story for the series, we were able to break a lot of Castlevania conventions and introduce a lot of new elements that we still use today. In both regards, I think we were very successful. As for Chronicles, I was always bothered that the original game in the series was so quickly overshadowed by its sequels, so I wanted to bring it back to the front of the pack as the game that started it all. It's such a great pure action game; I'm proud of the updates we made. This era also marks the first work on the series by artist Ayami Kojima.



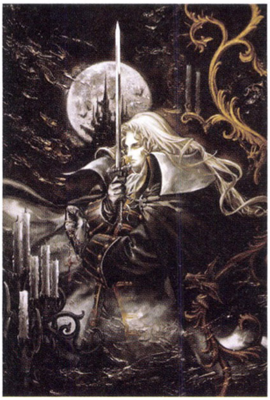


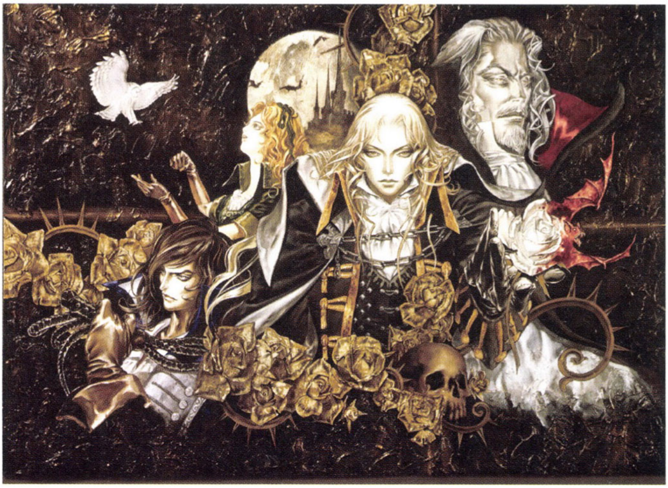
CASTLEVANIA: SYMPHONY OF THE NIGHT



CASTLEVANIA CHRONICLES

> "This era also marks the first work on the series by artist **Ayami Kojima**."



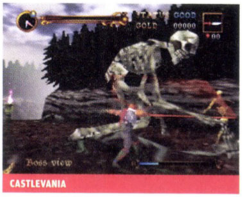


N64 CASTLEVANIA

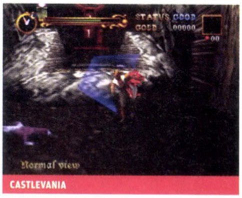
CASTLEVANIA 1999

CASTLEVANIA: LEGACY OF DARKNESS 1999

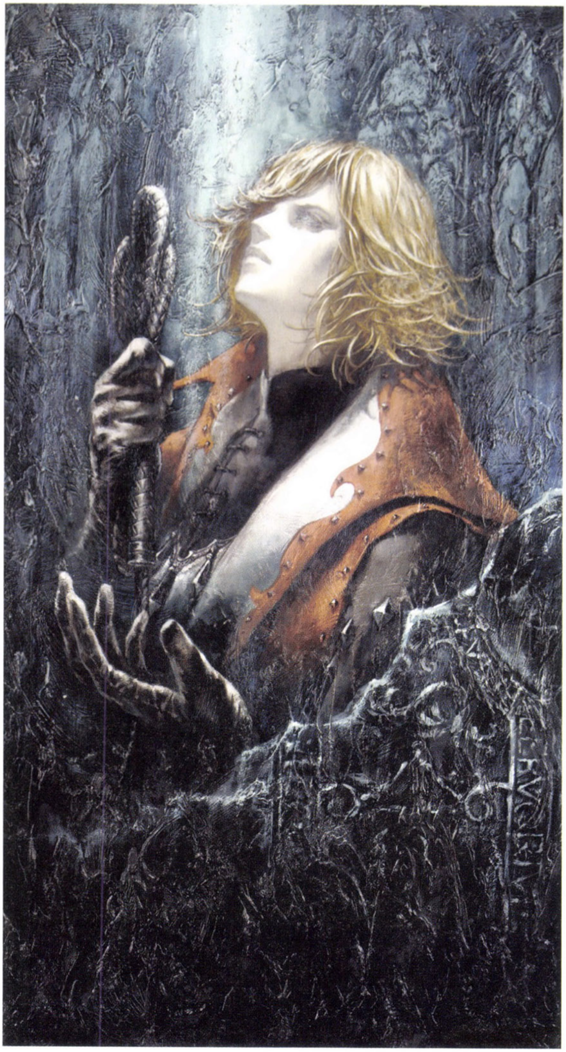
These are the very first 3-D Castlevania titles. I actually wasn't involved in these games, but I get the sense that the developers really struggled with the process of bringing a 2-D franchise to life in 3-D. I look at these titles as a Castlevania "Gaiden" (subseries), but I have to say that they both have a really unique take on the Castlevania world.

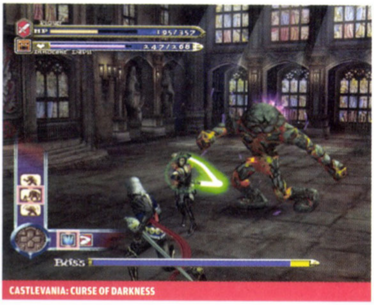

STATUS GOOD
GOLD 00000
Boss view

CASTLEVANIA

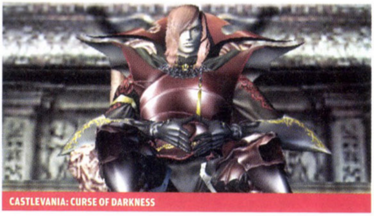

STATUS GOOD
GOLD 00000
Normal view

CASTLEVANIA




HP 195/357
147/168
Boss

CASTLEVANIA: CURSE OF DARKNESS



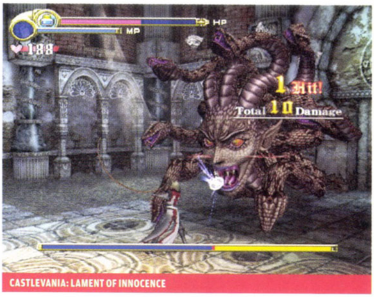
CASTLEVANIA: CURSE OF DARKNESS

PS2 CASTLEVANIA

CASTLEVANIA: LAMENT OF INNOCENCE 2003

CASTLEVANIA: CURSE OF DARKNESS 2005

Here we have my own take on Castlevania in 3-D. While these are both fun games, I have to wonder what could have been if I had been able to include everything I would have liked to. While they feature some of the best work by Ayami Kojima and Michiru Yamane to date, the perfect 3-D Castlevania game is still ahead of us.

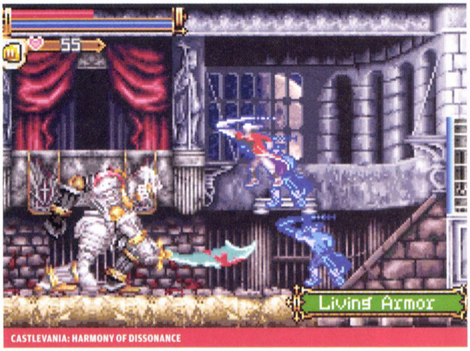

HP
MP
188
1 Hit!
Total 10 Damage

CASTLEVANIA: LAMENT OF INNOCENCE

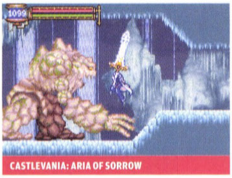
GBA CASTLEVANIA

CASTLEVANIA: CIRCLE OF THE MOON 2001
CASTLEVANIA: HARMONY OF DISSONANCE 2002
CASTLEVANIA: ARIA OF SORROW 2003

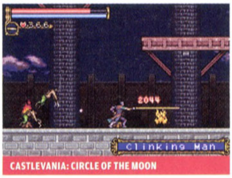
These titles share a similar design theme of 2-D action with heavy adventure and exploration elements. Harmony of Dissonance is where I started full-time as a producer, so you might be able to see the start of some of my personal touches to the series here. Aria of Sorrow was notable for the setting—we really jumped ahead in the timeline to show Dracula's influence on the future. I actually didn't work on Circle of the Moon, but I feel connected to it in some way. The director on that title is on my team right now, so perhaps it was fate for us to join!



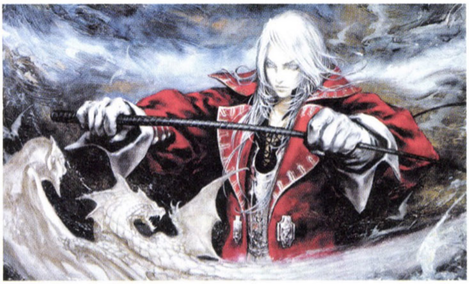
CASTLEVANIA: HARMONY OF DISSONANCE

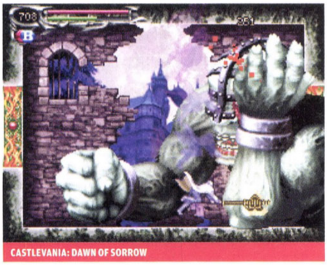


CASTLEVANIA: ARIA OF SORROW

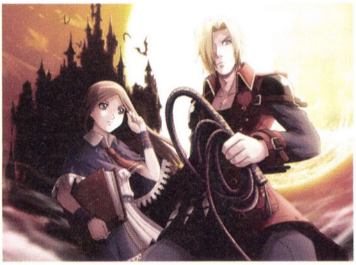


CASTLEVANIA: CIRCLE OF THE MOON





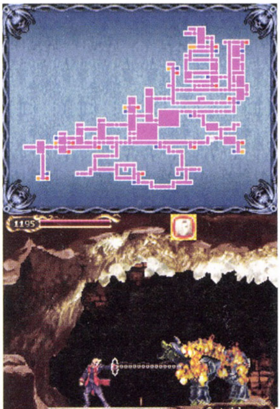
CASTLEVANIA: DAWN OF SORROW



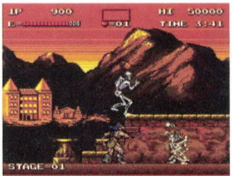
DS CASTLEVANIA

CASTLEVANIA: DAWN OF SORROW 2005
CASTLEVANIA: PORTRAIT OF RUIN 2006

I adore these two games. The Nintendo DS has provided us with so many ways to expand the gameplay of the series. While Portrait of Ruin was the first game in the series to include online play, the implementation of this feature was one of the most challenging moments in all my years on the series. I hope you enjoy it! Both of these games were made by the same team that worked on Aria of Sorrow. I sincerely believe this is the most talented team to ever work on the Castlevania series. I do have one observation to make about the direction of the series, however: people have always commented to me that the Castlevania series is too hard and might scare away people who have not played it. With these latest two titles we've taken this into account and made them accessible to all players, yet the "rumor" persists. I almost think these titles are too easy.



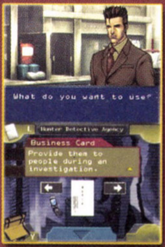
CASTLEVANIA: PORTRAIT OF RUIN



THE "OTHER" CASTLEVANIA

HAUNTED CASTLE 1988

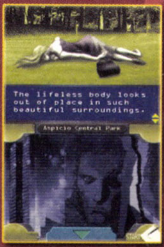
You've read Iga's thoughts on almost every iteration of the Castlevania franchise to come out in the last 20 years, but hardcore fans will notice one game that's conspicuous by its absence: Haunted Castle. Don't be fooled by the title; this obscure late-'80s arcade game is indeed part of the Castlevania series, and features many of its trademark elements, including the enemies, subweapons, and whip-wielding hero Simon Belmont (whose bride has been kidnapped by the Count). Simon's journey takes him through a graveyard, into swampy underground caverns, and inside Dracula's castle (complete with clock-tower stage), but be warned—the game is arguably the most difficult Castlevania of them all. —CHRIS H.


What do you want to use?

Hunter Detective Agency

Business Card

Provide them to people during an investigation.


The lifeless body looks out of place in such beautiful surroundings.

Aspicio Central Park

Episode 1:
The Petty Murder of a Fragile Heart

A murder has taken place in Aspicio City's peaceful Central Park. Jake's longtime friend, Detective Scott Kingsley, implores Jake to help solve the case. Can Jake uncover the killer's true motive?

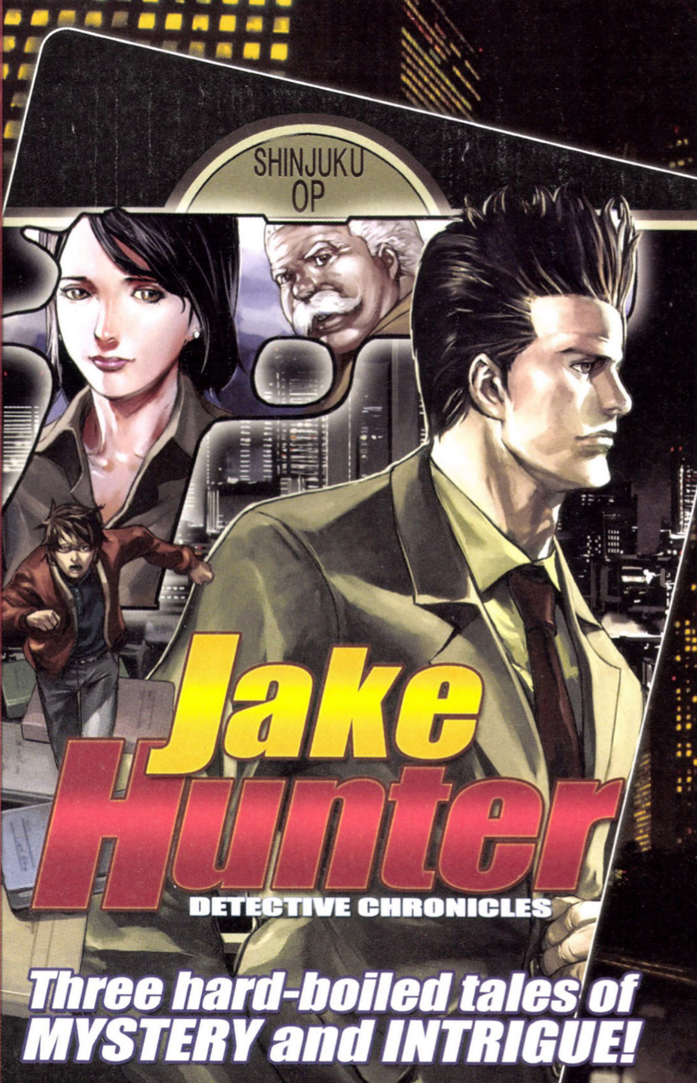
Episode 2:
Seaside City Conspiracy

On a quiet night, Jake gets a call out of the blue as a hysterical man pleads with Jake to find his missing girlfriend, Eva, in the harbor city of Depono. What seemed to be a routine missing persons case will lead him down a dark path of deception...

Episode 3:
Crash and Burn

A story about love, betrayal and death in the fast lane. Jake Hunter's skills will be put to the test, as he attempts to solve a murder case at the top racing circuit in Ceteri, where rivals, ex-lovers and friends are all suspects.

Samantha Martin
What can I do for you today, Jake?


SHINJUKU OP

Jake Hunter
DETECTIVE CHRONICLES

Three hard-boiled tales of MYSTERY and INTRIGUE!

TEEN
T
Drug Reference
Language
Mild Blood
Mild Violence
Use of Tobacco
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

NINTENDO DS

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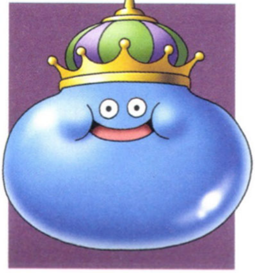
A FLIGHT OF DRAGONS

With enhanced DS versions of the classic Dragon Quest IV and the never-before-localized Dragon Quest V and VI, Square Enix is finally filling the gaping hole at the heart of the Dragon Quest library.

BY CASEY LOE

In the early '90s the Dragon Quest series sputtered out in North America just as it was reaching its creative peak. After lengthy translation delays left the NES release of Dragon Quest IV to be steamrolled by revolutionary Super NES titles like The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past and Final Fantasy IV, then-publisher Enix America gave up on Dragon Quest for nearly a decade.



The King Slime made its memorable debut in DQIV, and its empire of plush toys and paperweights followed soon after.

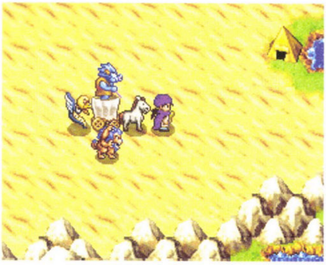
Meanwhile, the series was flourishing in Japan. Dragon Quest IV had kicked off a new era that moved beyond the expected swords-and-sorcery tropes of the first three games, and Enix began making bold experiments in storytelling and game design. Dragon Quest IV took the focus off of the game's traditional "Chosen One" hero and offered players four complete mini RPGs—each starring a different one of the hero's disparate party-members-to-be—before the hero even appeared. Dragon Quest V divided its story into generations, following a young hero as he grew into adulthood, married, fathered children, and then passed the mantle of his decades-long quest on to his progeny. Dragon Quest VI experimented with a Zelda-inspired parallel dream world, and introduced a class system that brought a renewed focus on character-building and combat to the series. Collectively the three titles are frequently referred to as the Heaven or Zenithia trilogy, although the three were apparently never intended to be a set. "Each Dragon Quest title represents a fresh start and a new story, so I don't see too much of a connection between games in the series," explains series creator Yuji Horii, inadvertently crapping all over my hook for this article. "I guess it could be said that the imagination of players has brought the titles together in a certain fashion."

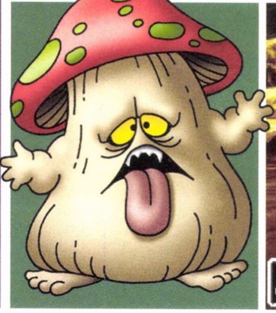
It may indeed be my imagination, but the three games *do* feel linked by their experimental storytelling techniques. They also share an impressive streak of avoiding North American localizations—English versions of Dragon Quest V and VI were rumored to have been in production before being canceled for unknown reasons, a PlayStation remake of DQIV was scuttled when its developer dissolved, and a PlayStation 2 remake of DQV fell through the cracks when Square and Enix merged. But finally that streak is at an end; Square Enix is promising to bring the DS versions of all three games to US shores, beginning with the September 16th release of Dragon Quest IV and ending with the release of Dragon Quest VI sometime in 2009. Hallelujah!

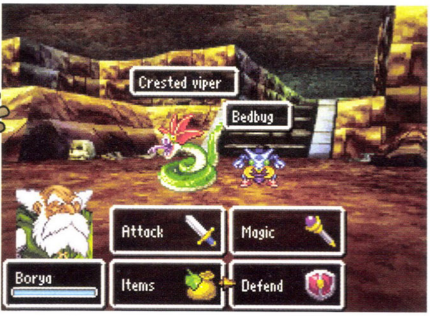
TWEAKING HISTORY

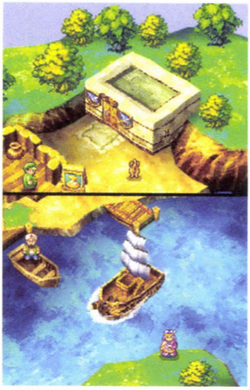
The DS has proven to be an ideal home for the series. The games are built on an enhanced version of the engine first used in the PlayStation's Dragon Quest VII, which features 2-D characters navigating 3-D environments from an angled overheard perspective. The most obvious DS perk is the extra real estate provided by the dual screens: while the upper screen is typically used to show you a second vertical chunk of the action (which can be a godsend in large dungeons), it can also be used to pull up detailed town and world maps and to display character data during battles. That's all pretty standard stuff, but the developers did come up with some other clever ideas, like allowing players to pull up shop lists from anywhere in a town, and displaying the resale values of all the items in a character's inventory.

The greatest enhancement may be the total lack of loading times. Dragon Quest games have very high encounter rates, but with speedy transitions from field to battle, instant responses to menu selections, and no prebattle monster pose-downs or postbattle loot-tallying screens, you can rip through an entire Dragon Quest IV battle in the time it takes a typical RPG to load its first combat menu. That's just enough time to enjoy the wonderfully detailed monster-attack animations but, alas, nowhere near enough time to appreciate composer Koichi









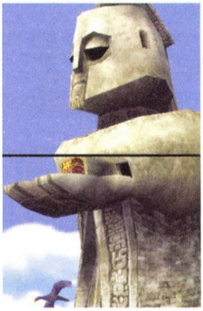
A horse-drawn wagon allows for huge parties that were never before possible in DQ. [DQV: Left. DQIV: Lower-left, right]

Suigiyama's sensational battle-music tracks, which sound great through the DS headphone jack.

Yuji Horii was involved in each of the remakes from start to finish, and relished the opportunity to refine his past creations. "If there is anything I am dissatisfied with, I make an effort to improve upon it. It's a different era now, so some of the character lines need to be tweaked, as well as game balance, puzzles, and other elements." This also means updating the older games with such modern conveniences as the expanded inventory bag, the combined talk and search button, and the ability to turn off the AI and take manual control of party members. All the new content from past PlayStation-family remakes has been added to the DS versions, including an additional chapter in Dragon Quest IV and an expansion of the party size (from three characters to four) in Dragon Quest V. In addition, Horii is promising some "entirely new" content for the DS makeovers of Dragon Quest V and VI. Of course, since virtually no one in North America has ever played either of those games, it will *all* be entirely new to us.

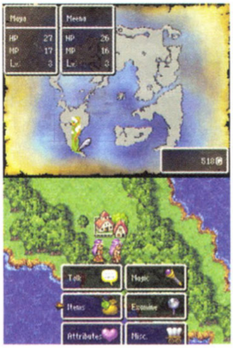
TIMEWORN OR TIMELESS?

From what we've seen, the DS incarnations of these lost classics look and sound wonderful, but there's no concealing the fact that they're based on 15- to 20-year-old-games. As fans of Final Fantasy III and IV's DS versions know, there's a certain charm in the fast-paced quests and simple battle systems of that era, but other elements can come off as more primitive than quaint. This may be especially true for the Dragon Quest series, which retains many old-fashioned elements for the sake of nostalgia, such as screechy sound effects sampled from the original NES Dragon Quest, and characters that walk in place even when standing still. Is Horii concerned that the games will be poorly received by American audiences, who will be playing them without the benefit of nostalgia for their earlier releases? Not at all. "I think that the 'old-fashioned' elements evoke more than just a sense of nostalgia," counters Horii. "They have universal appeal that can be appreciated in both Japan and America. Look at Disney characters, for example. They have been popular for 80 years, and it's more than nostalgia keeping them alive."



But if Dragon Quest has such universal appeal, why has it had such trouble winning over Western audiences? Part of the answer can be found right here—it's no wonder that Dragon Quest is often considered old-fashioned and stodgy, when three of its most inspired installments were either sent to die here or never released at all. Expect the conventional wisdom about the Dragon Quest series to shift when North American DS owners finally get a chance to see what they were missing.

The DS's upper screen provides maps, useful data, and plenty of eye-popping scenery.

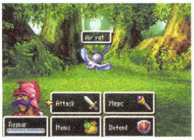


Dragon Quest IV: Chapters of the Chosen

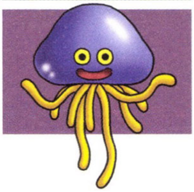
Previous Dragon Quests focused on the drama of a lone hero, and perhaps a few of his personality-free, player-generated companions. But Dragon Quest IV broke from tradition by offering a cast of unprecedented size, and gave each character a chapter to tell his or her own story. I've always liked the first few hours of RPGs the best, when each new level, weapon, or party member is cause for celebration, and getting to play four mini RPGs before a full-length one feels like four helpings of dessert before a good meal.

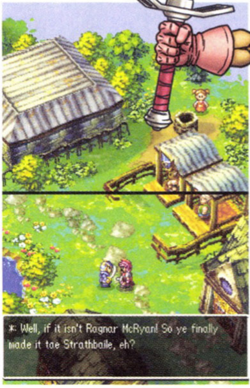
Chapter 1: Ragnar McRyan and the Case of the Missing Children

After a quick introduction in a very brief prologue, the ultimate hero of DQIV disappears while his future companions take center stage. First up is Ragnar McRyan, a beefy knight from the kingdom of Burland, tasked with solving

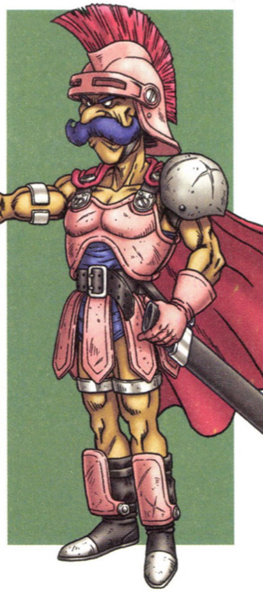


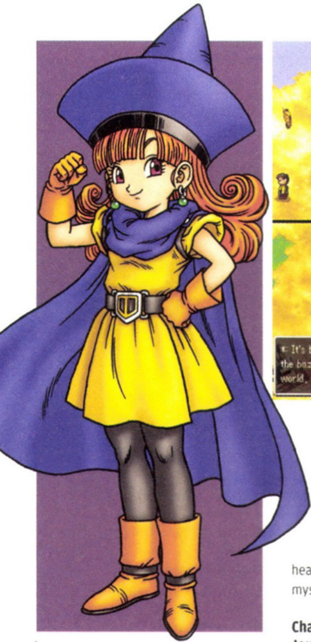
Healie the Heal Slime is Ragnar's only friend. Everyone else takes one look at the 'stache and starts running.

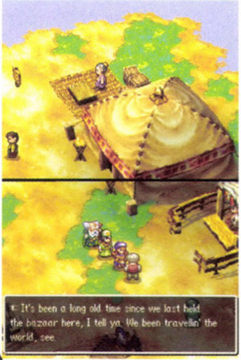




* Well, if it isn't Ragnar McRyan! So ye finally made it tae Strathbaile, eh?

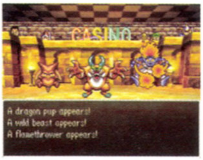




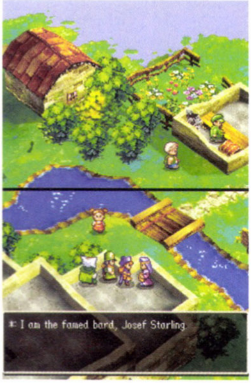

* It's been a long old time since we last held the bazaar here, I tell ya. We been travellin' the world, see.

Bodkin archer A casts Buff!

[Below] Screw poker—wagering on wild monster battles is the highlight of DQIV's casino.



A dragon pup appears!
A wild beast appears!
A flamethrower appears!


* I am the famed bard, Josef Starling.

the mystery of the disappearing children in the nearby town of Strathbaile. Perhaps the title card should read "the Case of the Missing Bairns," (Scottish for "children," apparently) since everyone in Ragnar's kingdom speaks with a thick brogue and plenty of Scots slang. Recent Dragon Quest titles have become famous for their zesty localizations, and Dragon Quest IV is certainly no exception.

Ragnar is the quintessential tank character, capable of wearing heavy armor and wielding most weapons, but with no magical aptitude. Fortunately, he can team up with Healie the Heal Slime, who will keep Ragnar hale and hearty as he pursues the bairns' mysterious abductor.

Chapter 2: Alena and the Journey to the Tourney

Alena is the bored princess—er, sorry, *tsarevna*—of Zamoksva, where the broken grammar of the Russian-accented speech will leave you wondering when Grand Theft Auto IV's Niko will show up. The Tsar couldn't keep his daughter from busting out of the palace in search of adventure, but at least managed to grant her protection in the form of his two top aides, Borya the magician and Kiryl the priest.

Alena's quest runs much longer than Ragnar's, spanning a large section of the world and involving everything from rescuing a kidnapped imposter tsarevna to battling for the honor of some other princess in a grand coliseum tournament. Eventually, even the spunky, willful Alena will learn that the world is in need of a hero far greater than herself.

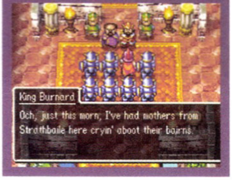
Chapter 3: Torneko and the Extravagant Excavation

Torneko Taloon's quest is where things get really interesting. Torneko is a bogtrottin' spalpeen from the Irish-flavored town of Lakanaba who doesn't fit into the usual RPG-hero mold. That's partially because he's too obese to fit into *anything* other than his striped muumuu, and partially

TRAIN YOUR BROGUE IN MINUTES A DAY!

In the NES era, when games with coherent English text were themselves a rarity, Dragon Quest stood out for its flavorful (and accurate) Shakespearean-era dialogue. That started a trend of flavorful, dialectal localizations that continues in Dragon Quest IV, where each of the characters hails from a region with a different Northern European dialect. Here's a primer on Irish Slang that will come in handy during Torneko's chapter.

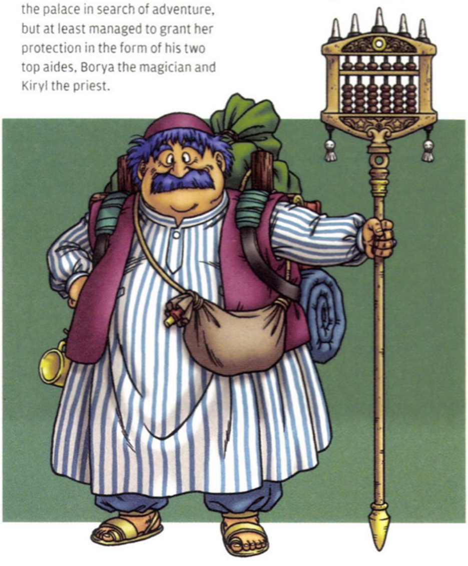
Banjaxed	**Broken down, ruined**
Bob	**Money**
Bogtrotter	**Country person (derogatory)**
Craic	**Fun or mischief**
Feen	**A fellow (male)**
Fooster	**Dither, fool around**
Quare	**Nice, or unusual**
Spalpeen	**Fool, rascal**

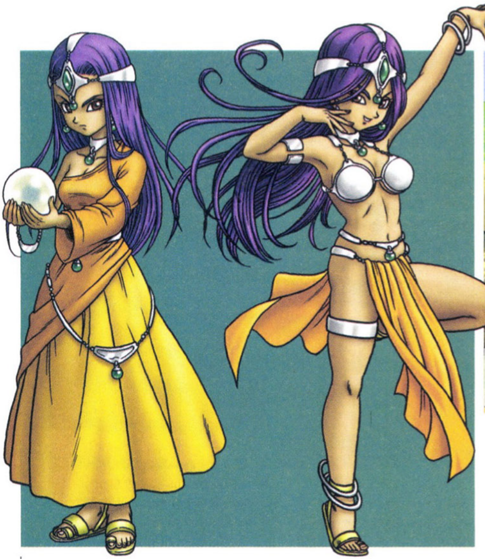

King Burnard
Och, just this morn, I've had mothers from Strathbaile here cryin' aboot their bairns.

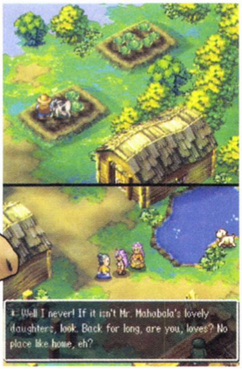
* We've always had money in the family. It only encourages my husband to buy ever more peculiar things for his collection.

Money-hungry Torneko is always working some sort of angle.

The king slime casts Snub!







♠: Well I never! If it isn't Mr. Mahabala's lovely daughters, look. Back for long, are you, loves? No place like home, eh?

Fight
Party
Tactics
Flee

Can you believe DQIV had hotties like Meena and Maya, but Torneko got the Mystery Dungeon spin-off?

The blinkster casts Crack!

because he's happily married and more interested in money than adventure.

Torneko begins the game making commission sales at the local weapon shop. Once he earns enough cash to outfit himself, he can begin a quest to earn enough money to buy a weapon shop of his own. That will entail everything from buying armaments in one town to sell at a markup in another, to hunting down lost antiquities for interested buyers. Torneko doesn't have any battle companions, but he can hire the mercenaries Laurel and Hardie for five-day stints whenever it's time to get his hands dirty. While Torneko does his share of fighting, the concept of a character whose strength is found more in his coin purse than his character level is an interesting one that has rarely been repeated.

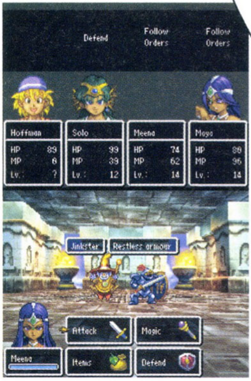
Chapter 4: Meena and Maya and the Mahabala Mystery

When Mahabala the Alchemist was murdered by one of his own students, he left behind two hot-blooded daughters who are thirsty for revenge. To complete their relatively short quest, you'll need to search the several towns in their France-inspired homeland to find the only witness to the murder and lure the culprit out of hiding.

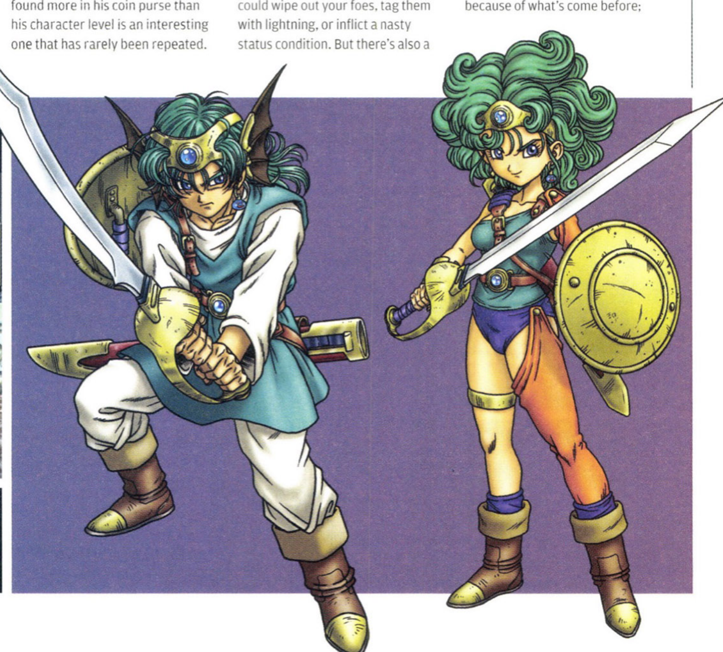
As a fortune-teller, Meena wields the coolest weapon in the game: a deck of silver tarot cards. Each card contains a random spell effect that could wipe out your foes, tag them with lightning, or inflict a nasty status condition. But there's also a death card that could kill members of your own party, making this powerful weapon a risky one.

Chapter 5: The Chosen

Some 10 or 15 hours after your brief meeting in the prologue, the character you chose to be your hero at the beginning of the game finally takes center stage, and the real Dragon Quest IV begins. Don't worry that you'll get shortchanged on the usual epic hero quest because of what's come before;



[Right] The choice of a male or female hero is purely an aesthetic one. They have equivalent stats, despite the fact that the female hero refuses to wear armor on her right limbs.



INTERVIEW 1

TOO MUCH WHACK, OR NOT QUITE ENOUGH?

Dragon Quest creator Yuji Horii reminisces about Dragon Quest IV

What was the inspiration for dividing Dragon Quest IV into five stand-alone chapters?
In Dragon Quest III, you went on an adventure with three companions, but these characters were simply created from scratch by the player. I thought it would be interesting to explore the lives of your comrades, which became the inspiration for Dragon Quest IV.

What can you tell us about the new chapter that has been added to the DQIV remakes? Was this part of your original plan for the game?
We didn't really have any plans for bonus features in the original Famicom [NES] version. We were having enough schedule problems trying to complete the main story in time! But when approaching a remake, we already have a completed product at hand, so there is a bit more room for improvement. So when we looked back at the game, we decided we wanted to add a little bit to the game, resulting in the new chapter. As for the details of the chapter, I wouldn't want to spoil the surprise. You should play it yourself.

Dragon Quest IV had a level of character development and storyline depth that was unprecedented for its time. What was the player reaction when it was first released?
Dragon Quest III was praised for being an RPG that allowed the player a great deal of freedom. However, when Dragon Quest IV was released, it received some criticism about how the story and characters felt restrictive. But after its release, many character-centered games began appearing in the market. And Dragon Quest IV's characters still have many fans today.

Dragon Quest IV was the fourth DQ game you developed on NES hardware. Do you miss the days of being able to make several DQ installments on familiar hardware, or do you welcome the new opportunities afforded by each new hardware generation?
I've been making games for over 20 years now, so I often think back to the good old days when you could make a game with a small development team. But during the Famicom's life cycle, there were always new cartridges featuring new technology and more memory coming out, so it often felt like we were working with new hardware.

The Dragon Quest series has never been too demanding on the hardware, and we're happy with where we are in terms of 2-D. Also, it makes me sad that the change to new hardware often means a goodbye to old software.

I wonder if there will be a day when games are no longer played on TV screens or monitors. But then it would be like we were in the world of *The Matrix* or *Total Recall*, wouldn't it?

Can you tell us about some of the new features that are unique to the DS version, such as the new version of the "immigrant town"?
The idea for an "immigrant town" first appeared in Dragon Quest VII, where it was possible to transfer townspeople via memory cards. But players were not accustomed to carrying around memory cards for this sort of purpose, so when we implemented the town in the PlayStation version of Dragon Quest IV, we made it something players could expand on their own. But with the Nintendo DS remake, and the system's chance-encounter communication function, we reinstated the transfer system. You can give your characters personalized messages to send to other players and build a town of your very own.

Can you share with us some of your memories about the development of Dragon Quest IV? Which of its innovations is your favorite today? Which was the hardest to implement?
My favorite would have to be the chapter progression of the story. I enjoyed presenting each character, allowing them to grow in front of the player, and then bringing them all together.

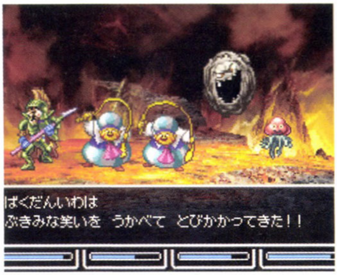
The hardest feature to implement was the party's battle AI. Given the AI limitations of the time, characters like a magic-using priest ended up casting Whack every turn. The AI couldn't get over the amazing instant-kill power of the spell (despite it only working some of the time), resulting in a rather lackluster offense.

In future titles, we tweaked the AI and found ways to stop it from favoring spells like Whack. But now when I look at the most recent version of Dragon Quest IV, the priest I mentioned almost never casts Whack! Now that feels unnatural! Next I'd like to tweak the system so he casts the spell just a little bit more!

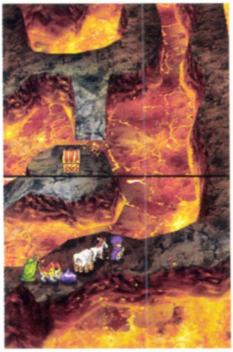
the hero's chapter is considerably longer than all the previous chapters combined.

Dragon Quest IV spawned a few other innovations for the series. One is the vastly increased party size; once the hero meets up with his companions, you'll have a party of eight characters, with four in your active party and four traveling in a wagon behind you, ready to take a front-line slot whenever you need them. Another innovation was the introduction of party-member AI to the series, which was a marvel in 1990. As for how it holds up today, let's just say that you'll be glad that the DS version allows you to turn off that AI and take manual control of your party.

The technological innovations of the original version of Dragon Quest IV may not impress in this day and age, but the unique omnibus structure of the game holds up great, thanks to the strong personalities of the characters involved.



ばくだんいわは
ぶきみな笑いを　うかべて　とびかかってきた！！



DQV may share an engine with DQIV, but flashy locations like this magma cave and the waterfall cave (next page) make it a whole lot prettier.

Dragon Quest V: Hand of the Heavenly Bride

While most Dragon Quest titles have a mood of rollicking adventure, Dragon Quest V dabbled in more profound emotions, and ended up as one of the most highly regarded RPGs in history. The game begins on the day that the main character is born, and follows him throughout his entire life. At first he's a mere child, accompanying his father on a quest to find the Chosen One. In time he becomes a man (sorry, ladies—you can't choose a female in this one), marries a bride of your choosing, and even fathers children. The basic quest of finding the Chosen One and battling the lord of darkness is the same as in every Dragon Quest, but it now spans multiple decades, and the level of investment in your family drives it to epic proportions that

THE GREATEST DRAGON QUEST EVER?

Dragon Quest creator Yuji Horii makes the case for his favorite entry in the series

What was the inspiration for DQV's generational storyline? Considering its popularity, would you ever consider using a similar structure for a future title?
In Dragon Quest IV we explored the lives of several characters. With Dragon Quest V, I wanted to shift the focus to the life of a single character. The story features a battle with a dark force over three generations. Although it would have been possible to change the character with each generation, we decided to start with the hero as a child. Then the player watches him grow up and become a parent himself. We thought this method of storytelling would have the most emotional impact.

Although many of us, as children, see our parents as always having been adults, I wanted to send the message that everybody starts as a child, and becomes an adult by overcoming obstacles. With two Dragon Quest V remakes, I feel that I have accomplished this goal, so I doubt I'll experiment with the same idea again.

The DS versions of Dragon Quest IV and V will be separated by eight months in Japan. Were you able to make any improvements to the basic game engine in that time?
The basic game engine for the three games has been fixed since Dragon Quest IV's release. But Dragon Quest IV was based off a PlayStation remake, and Dragon Quest V off a PlayStation 2 remake, so there are some portions of V that we have had to make again from scratch. That's what we've been working on these eight months.

Since DQV's release, the concept of recruiting monsters has been heavily expanded upon in the DQ Monsters series. Will you be updating any of DQV's monster-recruiting mechanics based on the innovations in that series?
After experimenting with monster recruiting in the original Dragon Quest V, we found that we liked the idea so much we made the Monsters series to focus on this single element. However, with the remake of Dragon Quest V, if we take the recruiting system too far, it will detract from the main storyline, so there probably won't be any updates.

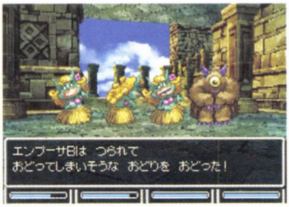
We're thrilled to play the new chapter in the DS version of DQIV. Is there any possibility of a similar addition for DQV—perhaps another generation?
I can't go into details right now, but we are preparing something entirely new for the Nintendo DS release.

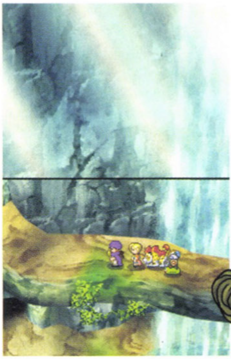
In an interview several years ago, you cited DQV as your favorite in the series. Does it still hold that position in your heart? What did you find most satisfying about creating it?
Yes, Dragon Quest V is still my favorite in the series. On top of the theme of family in the game, I'm also very passionate about a certain difficult choice the player is forced to make in the game.

are unusual for the series. The themes of family and growing up inspire some heart-warming moments, but Horii's scenario dishes up plenty of gut-wrenching tragedy too. There will be many difficult decisions along the way, and the right answers won't always be clear nor will the consequences always be pleasant.

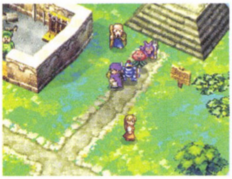
With its focus on a single family, Dragon Quest V had a smaller human cast than DQIV, but made up for it by introducing the ability to recruit a large variety of enemy monsters. This mechanic, which would eventually be spun off into the Dragon Quest Monsters series, was hamstrung somewhat by the three-character party size. Fortunately, the DS version will boost the party size to the usual four and rebalance the battles accordingly.

It's amazing that in the 16 years since Dragon Quest V became a legend, its generational storyline has never been copied effectively. (Don't mention Phantasy Star III—that actually came out first, but sucked too much to get credit for the idea.) While we haven't had a chance to get our hands on the DS version of Dragon Quest V yet, we suspect that it will be the highlight of the trilogy, as it's coming from exceptionally strong source material.

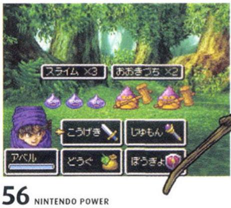

エンプーサBは つられて
おどってしまいそうな おどりを おどった！

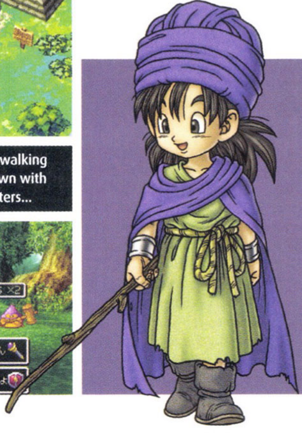


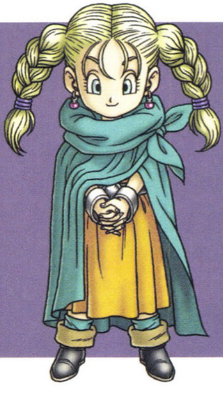
When your quest begins, you'll be all of six years old (left). Keep that cape and turban clean, kid—you'll still be wearing them 10 years down the road (right)!

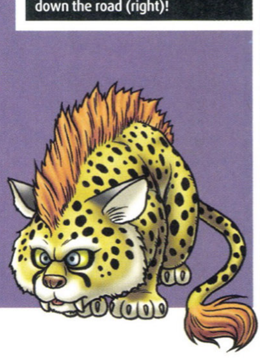


Don't mind me, I'm just walking through the center of town with three bloodthirsty monsters...









BRINGING THE THRILL BACK TO DRAGON QUEST

Dragon Quest creator Yuji Horii looks forward to killing you in the upcoming Dragon Quest VI

Dragon Quest VI is the only game in the trilogy that has never been remade before. Has that led you to approach the project differently from the other two?

Dragon Quest VI will be resurrected for the first time in over 10 years, so there are quite a few changes I would like to make. But you'll have to wait to find out what they are!

Dragon Quest VI has more of a focus on combat and character-building than past installments. Why did you decide to go in this direction?

In Dragon Quest IV and V, the focus was placed on storytelling and characters. This evolved with the introduction of the wagon and monsters joining the party. But when I looked back at them, I also thought to myself, "Are the battles becoming too easy?"

With an AI-controlled party and monsters that fight with you, it created a fun experience. But it also meant that players weren't facing as many challenges. Parties weren't being wiped out much anymore. So in Dragon Quest VI, I wanted to make combat more thrilling for players again.

What inspired you to create Dragon Quest VI's dream world?

At that time in many concurrent titles, somewhere in the middle of the game, the player would be introduced to an entirely new area of the map, like an unexplored continent. So I thought it would be interesting to have two worlds from the very beginning and have the player traverse between them.

Going into too many details will spoil the game, but I'm very fond of the earth-shattering revelation awaiting players in this title.

Did you plan to add any new content along the lines of the new chapter in DQIV? Will there be new character classes, or changes made to the current classes?

As I mentioned earlier, we do have something planned, but I can't talk about it at this time. I know you're going to like it, though, so stay tuned!

ビアンカ「なんだか くらい
不気味な感じ…。
今にも お化けが 出

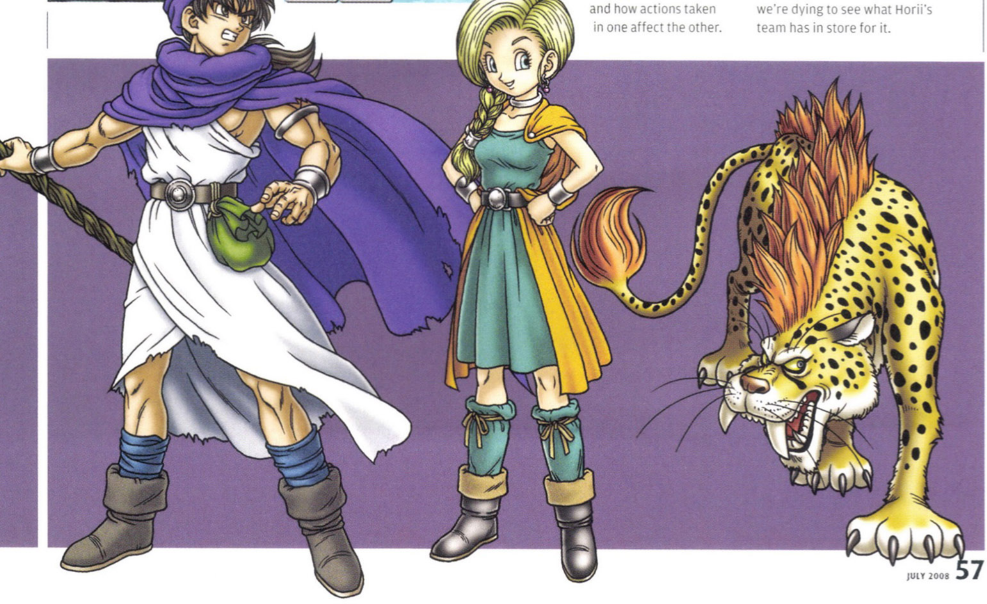
まほうつかいは
ヒャドを となえた!

Dragon Quest VI: Realms of Reverie

Dragon Quest VI marked a return to a conventional narrative style, but the game's story still had a few surprising twists. Like Chrono Trigger (which Yuji Horii also worked on) and The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past, the quest revolves around the relationship between different worlds—in this case, the real world and the titular realms of reverie—and how actions taken in one affect the other.

But the real focus of Realms of Reverie was on updating the game's aging combat system. DQVI finally revisited the class system that was introduced in Dragon Quest III, and expanded it with new classes, new hybrid classes that can only be earned by mastering multiple normal classes, and the ability to switch classes at any time.

This DS version of Dragon Quest VI has yet to be unveiled to the public or discussed in any detail. Since this is the only game of the three that has never before been remade on any system, we're dying to see what Horii's team has in store for it.



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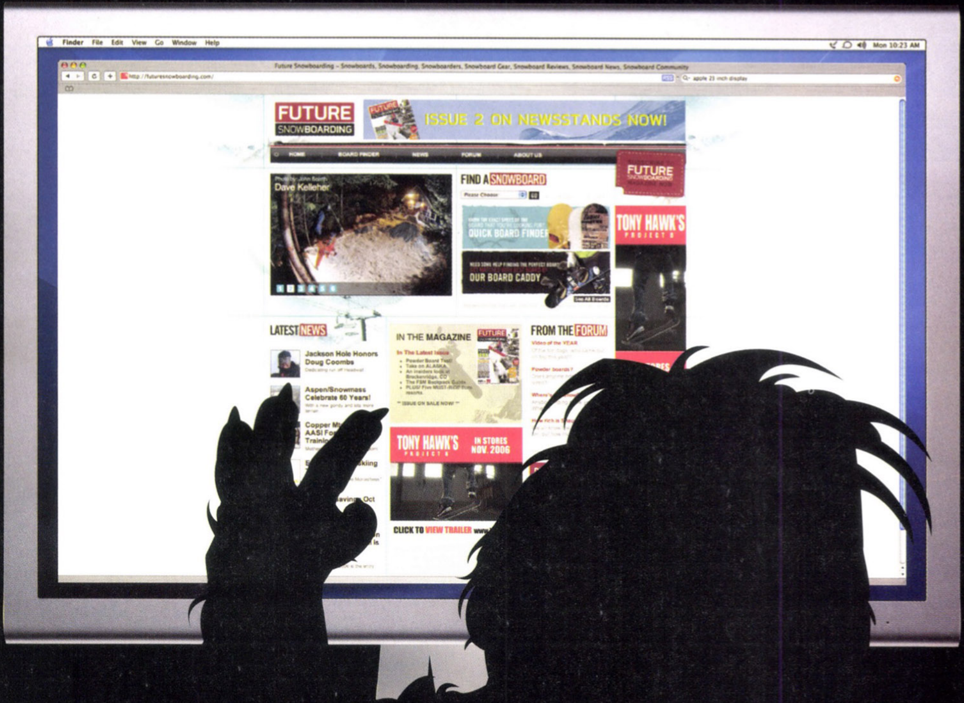
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A WHOLE NEW BALL GAME

BY CHRIS SHEPPERD

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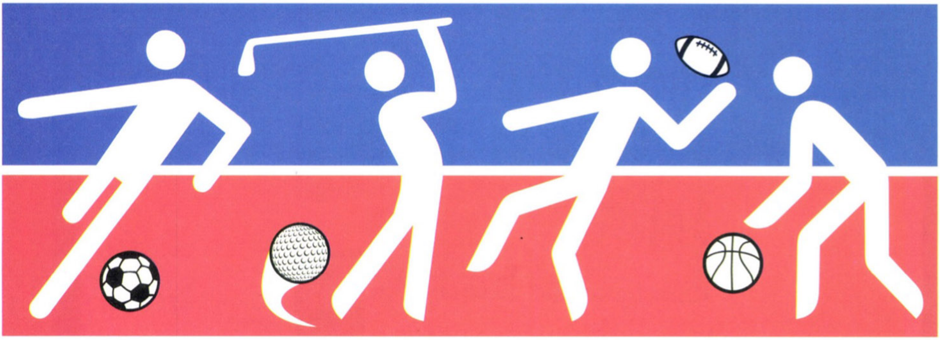


For years, the EA Sports games have been the standard for hardcore sports sims, with each year's iteration looking and feeling more and more realistic. At the same time, the games' controls have become increasingly complex and challenging to use. Recognizing the issues that plague longtime EA Sports gamers and the difficulty of drawing new devotees to the series, EA has introduced a concept called All-Play across the entire lineup of Wii EA Sports titles this year. It's a set of features that encompasses a wide range of gameplay aspects, from controls to modes to minigames. All-Play makes great strides in leveling the playing field for gamers of all skill levels, but manages to avoid dumbing down the game for veterans.

But All-Play isn't the only story for these top-flight titles—our exclusive look at each game reveals huge plans for the Madden, NBA Live, Tiger Woods, NCAA Football, and FIFA franchises. It's evident that an unprecedented level of dedication is going into the Wii versions of these titles—the franchises are no longer trying to get by on ports with added Wii gestures. To acquire a better understanding of this renewed focus on the Wii editions, we also talk with executive producer David McCarthy, who explains how and why Wii is so important for the EA Sports franchises [see below].

INTERVIEW

SPORTS TALK

With all of the big additions going into this year's EA Sports lineup, we thought it'd be good to gain some insight from someone in the know. We talked with executive producer David McCarthy, a longtime veteran of the EA Sports franchises, whose work extends to virtually every facet of the EA Sports collection on Wii. He discusses what All-Play is, why it exists, and how it's become a focal point for the development teams.

NINTENDO POWER What was your approach to tackling the EA Sports lineup on Wii this year?

DAVID MCCARTHY There were three pillars that I thought we needed to nail across our entire Wii lineup. The first one is that we needed to bring a sense of fun to our Wii games. I know that's a really broad term, but it's fun in the context of our Wii EA Sports lineup that gives it a particular meaning. Local social multiplayer is the primary gameplay experience which should drive all of our design decisions. We can have dynasty modes and tournaments in there, but we are focused [on multiplayer] because we know that even with our core EA Sports consumer that they view the Wii version almost as a wonderful social multiplayer device that they can share with their friends. Another element of fun is that I strongly believe that we needed to take a more lighthearted approach to portraying sports on Wii. We look for cues to take from the arcade space while not losing the authenticity of our core sports like football and basketball. We can get out of that hardcore broadcast approach, as well, and quite frankly take ourselves a little less seriously when it comes to

MADDEN 09 ALL-PLAY

Over the nearly 20 years that the Madden franchise has existed, the direction has always been to create the most realistic professional-football simulation possible. Graphics have improved, new features have been added—some even say that buttons have been added to controllers to accommodate the intricacies of the Madden games. But Wii has changed the rules for the whole industry—new control styles and a broad fan base have opened up new paths for the EA Sports games, and the effect is, arguably, felt most in the venerable NFL title.

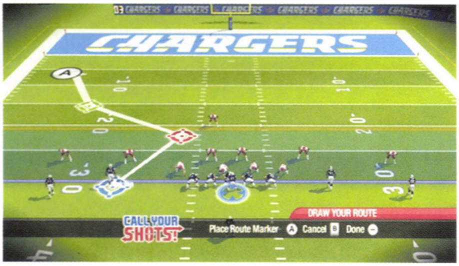
The controls for Madden on Wii have been tweaked to make sure that everything feels intuitive and approachable. Having a separate move for every little action in last year's game was overkill, so the team slimmed down the gestures a bit. "We focused on making the gesture controls more recognizable and responsive while reducing the total number of gestures needed to play the game successfully," producer Thomas Singleton tells us. The Wii version includes an exclusive play-calling system titled Call Your Shots, where you simply point the Wii remote at the screen, highlight a player, and literally draw a route for him while at the line of scrimmage. Singleton says, "For years people have asked for a system that would allow the drawing of custom hot routes on the fly." Call Your Shots is one of the most exciting aspects of Madden NFL 09, and definitely revolutionizes something as fundamental as the playbook.

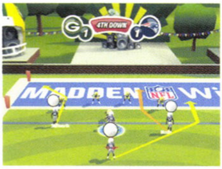
Madden has always been one of the top sports franchises from a visual standpoint, and as a result gamers have certain expectations of its appearance. "Graphics and presentation were a big area for us this year on the Wii version," explains Singleton. "The focus is going away from the photorealistic look, and instead [the game has] been redesigned with a fun, arcade-influenced, vibrant look in mind." It's definitely a departure for the series, but Singleton is confident the graphics will be well-received; he tells us, "This is easily the best-looking Madden [game on] Wii to date."

Madden takes advantage of the new All-Play system (discussed in more detail in the interview below) in a variety of intriguing ways. With All-Play turned on, players are assisted in several areas—the controls are simpler, the playbook is slimmed down, and potential annoyances such as the play clock are turned off. Less-evident assists exist under the surface, such as an improved rate of evading the first tackle when running the ball. What's important to note is that All-Play isn't intended to "dumb down" the game for novice users. The development team's goal is to teach people how to play the game better so that they can enjoy Madden immediately, but also reach a higher level of proficiency the more they play. "The bottom line," says Singleton, "is that we're not simply lowering the AI difficulty; we're actually helping you become more competitive through our controls and feedback as you learn the game of football."

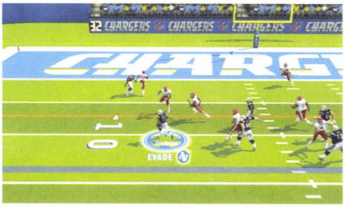
In addition to having revamped the series' features and controls, the development has included a Wii-exclusive mode called 5-on-5, and has really opened up the online opportunities for Madden 09. The 5-on-5 mode features backyard-style graphics and gameplay (players have big, cartoonish heads, and there are backyard rules such as Mississippi counts) that are great for quick pick-up-and-play fun when your friends are over.

Despite the emphasis on making the game easy to jump into against either strangers or friends, the overall play experience will be more robust than ever before. There's potential for updatable rosters, live scores from real-world NFL games, and leaderboards, as well as other online goodies. John Madden and Al Michaels return to the announcing booth to help commentate on the action. And don't be surprised if you see your Mii pop up in a variety of locations, including on the field (and wearing zebra stripes) as the "Refer-Mii." The developers remain coy about some details: Who will get 100 ratings in some categories? What will recently retired cover boy Brett Favre do in the game? We'll bring you more as the game's August launch date approaches.





Get in the zone (the end zone, that is) with the game's new Wii-exclusive Call Your Shots feature.



all the details that we throw at the users. You'll notice a presentation style on these games that does feel a little more fun.

Pillar number two is accessibility. I think we took a good step with EA Sports last year with Family Play, where we created a control scheme that somebody who found the current controls overwhelming could choose. But I don't think we nailed an engaging experience for them; we did make it better for them but I don't think we did a great job. Throughout the games this year we really preached the idea of accessibility, which doesn't mean simply dumbing down the games. It means removing barriers that frustrate people; there's still an element of gamesmanship and challenge in there, but [it's] a situation where people of all ages and experience levels can play at the same time and not feel cheated or handicapped in an overt way that takes away from their enjoyment.

The third pillar I feel strongly about is innovation, actually. I felt that, in every game we do, just because we're trying to make it a more fun social experience and a more accessible experience, there's no excuse to not innovate. I've really tried to get all of the franchises to put on just one or two or three really meaty innovation features that they feel really change the way you play the game. What we feel we've learned over the past year is that our EA Sports fans and sports fans in general on Wii want a different way to play. I think that's a really special thing because not only are we saying we're going to take ourselves a little less seriously, we're going to pump up the fun factor, we're going to make it more accessible to the broader

FIFA 09 ALL-PLAY

Much like soccer in America, the FIFA series hasn't always had the biggest following here, but those who play it are as avid as fans get. The FIFA development team's charge this year has been to open up their version of "the beautiful game" to a wider audience through new modes, new Wii gesture methods, and a host of other features. But the FIFA game franchise has, wisely, not turned its back on the longtime fans—advanced controls, tons of teams and players, and online multiplayer look to make FIFA 09 All-Play a robust, well-rounded soccer offering that everyone will be able to enjoy.

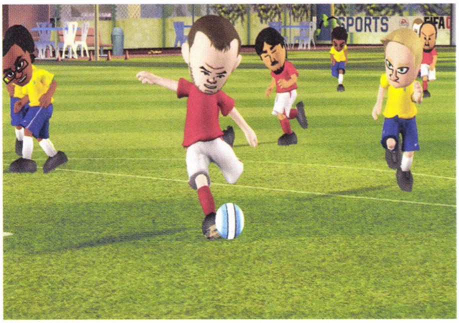
For FIFA 09, the All-Play system isn't a static setting. Like the other games' implementations, All-Play is designed to level the playing field between novice and advanced players, mostly through control schemes that are more accessible to new gamers but also through under-the-surface tweaks that will make it a little easier to pass and score goals. But FIFA 09's All-Play doesn't stop there—it actually pays attention to how you're playing, and helps you out only if you need it. "All-Play transitions a new FIFA 09 player into a seasoned pro with a gradual and intelligent learning curve," producer Jamie Toghill says. For example, when you're new to All-Play, a little window will pop up whenever it's a good time to perform a slide tackle. But if you show that you're able to routinely pull off the move at the right moment, you'll stop seeing that message. Soon you'll stop relying on the feedback and start doing the moves on your own.

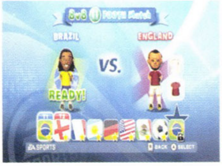
Along with All-Play are several new control schemes to suit a variety of skill levels. As you might expect, Wii remote gestures figure heavily into all of them, and players can decide whether to use the nunchuk for added control. But FIFA 09 takes the remote's capabilities a step further by allowing you to play via the pointer. Toghill explains, "This control scheme not only provides an innovative new approach to offensive soccer but also offers a very tight and tactical defensive control system." You'll be able to control all aspects of your team using just the Wii pointer, which promises to be an innovative and surprisingly robust way to play. Don't worry, FIFA veterans: if you're still resisting the move to gesture controls or the new pointer system, you can still use a Classic or GameCube controller.

Without question, Wii has become synonymous with social play, and that hasn't gone unnoticed by the FIFA team. Last year's FIFA introduced a mode called Footii Party, a fun compilation of minigames featuring cartoony caricatures of the world's best players. This year the developers have expanded Footii Party to include Footii Match, where you can bring Miis onto the pitch alongside Mii-style superstars such as Wayne Rooney and Ronaldinho for some head-to-head fun against your friends. Expect some wild goals and even wilder celebrations from the superstar-styled Miis.

Though many alterations have been made to extend FIFA's reach to new gamers, there are several aspects that the development team refuses to compromise on. For one, FIFA 09 All-Play will feature more than 500 teams and about 14,000 players, all with accurate attributes and statistics. The work to accumulate all these players falls on a group of intense researchers. "The detail that these guys go into is mind-boggling.... Their soccer knowledge and passion for the sport is immense," Toghill raves. It's not just stats, either—what foot an athlete prefers to use or the kinds of dribble moves he prefers are also factored in. And players will still have full control over tactical formations and overall team strategies. For all of the lighthearted social aspects of FIFA 09 All-Play, there's still plenty of meat for experienced players to sink their teeth into.

Like FIFA 08, the online version of the game will include the popular Interactive Leagues feature. There's also a new pointer-driven front-end menu to help you get into the games faster. Interestingly, you'll be able to see what control style your opponents are using before the match starts. If you get to the point where that changes the way you take on an opponent, you've got a serious leg up on us. [No release timeframe has been announced.]





In addition to standard-looking soccer action, Mii versions of popular players are featured in the new Footii matches.

INTERVIEW CONTINUED

audience, and at the same time for those who are deep into the sport, we're going to offer a different way to play the game, and I think that's critical for all of our franchises.

Do you think you'll still draw the hardcore sports fans into the Wii versions?

The heart of our business always is and always will be our hardcore fans. I don't think there's any exception on Wii. As long as we create ways for them to experience gameplay that they consider meaningful to them, and as long as our accessibility features don't dumb down or dull the experience for them, I think they'll be just fine. We've spent a lot of time talking to EA Sports consumers over the past year to learn how we really need to do something truly different in this space, and it's come back time and time again that they're okay with us pushing boundaries and trying something different on Wii—just still give me a chance to have that competitive, innovative experience that I love to get out of EA Sports.

Give us a little insight into what All-Play is all about.

The easiest way to do that is to contrast it to Family Play. Family Play, for all intents and purposes, was a control solution, where we said, it feels like our default controller setup is just too complex for somebody who doesn't know sports or football really well, or [who isn't] really comfortable with having a Wii remote and nunchuk in their hands. All-Play is really going much farther beyond that; it's an overarching philosophy to the game. It touches

NCAA FOOTBALL 09 ALL-PLAY

The pageantry and excitement of college football are unparalleled in college sport. Every Saturday in fall fans pack stadiums around the country to cheer on their alma maters. It's that unique experience that the development team for NCAA Football looks to capture every year. In NCAA Football 09 All-Play, new advancements such as Wii-specific gestures and the ability to hype up the crowd are but a few of the ways to tap into the excitement of the collegiate sport.

With so many people attending real-life NCAA games every year, there's obviously a huge potential for NCAA Football, especially for folks looking to follow up the fun they've had with Wii Sports. The new All-Play mode is a tremendous step toward getting everyone involved, not just the veteran gamer. The most apparent application of All-Play is its simplified gestures for novice players. Whereas advanced players can still use specific gestures to represent moves such as juking, throwing, or tackling, newbies have the option to simply shake the Wii remote in any direction to perform the same moves.

But NCAA 09 also gives advanced gamers more control than ever before. Two of the major additions are just before the snap: with a combination of the B Button and a flick of the Wii remote, you can send the defensive line to bull-rush the offensive line in a move called Jump the Snap. To counter that move, the quarterback has a new Fake Snap gesture to simulate snapping the ball in an attempt to draw the defense offside. Then, once the ball is snapped you can use gestures to pitch the ball on option plays, a key ingredient of many college-football playbooks.

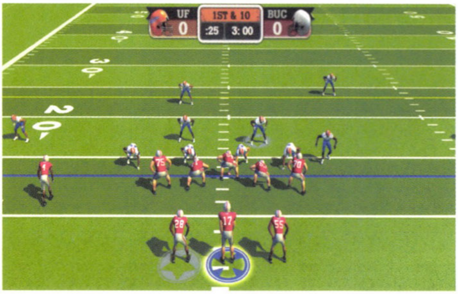
One nice aspect is that you can change your All-Play control settings on the fly—you don't have to stick with what you chose at the beginning of the game. "The great thing is that players can find a zone that they're really happy with by using a different mix of All-Play controls and settings," lead designer Eric Hine says. Everyone can test to find a gesture system that they're comfortable with, whether it's new moves for advanced players or uncomplicated movements for casual fans or new gamers.

With so many different styles of play and with more than 200 teams in the game, the number of overall plays available is potentially overwhelming. Even the biggest fan will have plenty to learn. Whether it's a repertoire of shotgun-formation pass plays out of the University of Florida playbook or the multitude of option plays you'll see the Air Force Academy run, getting a handle on a team's nuances can be a challenge. To help you learn the ins and outs of a given playbook, All-Play presents three levels of play-calling. The most simple is Ask Coach, which gives you a play, then some advice on the current situation. It's an intuitive way to learn a playbook quickly and to recognize trends when calling certain plays. Once you're ready to move on, you can slide into a pared-down basic playbook that is easy to digest. Then you can move on to a complete playbook that has all the nuances of a real one, such as team-specific formations and identifiers for hot routes. This tiered approach is designed to let people's skills grow fluidly rather than forcing them to struggle with complicated controls and plays from the beginning.

To help capture the excitement and emotion of the college game, NCAA Football 09 has enlisted Miis to help you out and to pump up the crowd. When you're calling plays, your Mii will let you know how you're doing and maybe suggest a strategy. Then, after a big touchdown, you can celebrate with Wii-remote and nunchuk gestures in a Crowd Hype minigame. The better you do at Crowd Hype, the more fans will fill the stands, and your team will benefit through an increase in stats for the game.

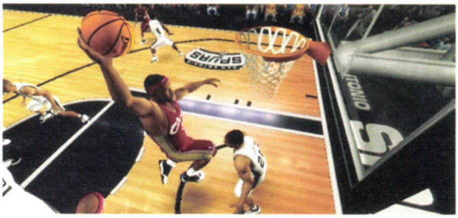
But with all of the additions to NCAA Football 09, the greatest development focus was on its social aspects. Hine shares, "Our top priority was making sure the game is the most approachable, entertaining, and fun football experience with one player or even four players." To that end, the gameplay will progress a lot faster than it has in the past, with fewer breaks between plays to keep things moving. "We wanted to keep players actually playing and not waiting," explains Hine. You can experience the fruits of the development team's labor when NCAA Football 09 All-Play hits shelves in June.

Whatever happened to three yards and a cloud of dust? Looks like Ohio State got their hands on somebody's playbook...

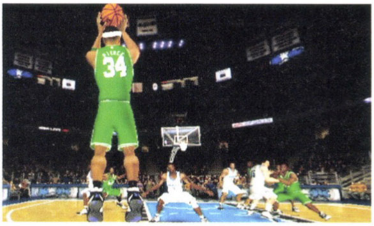


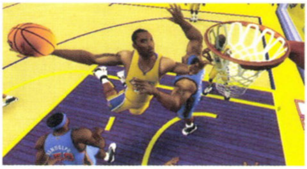
everything; it's a controller solution. Now you have a controller solution where you can go Wii remote-only, with bits and pieces of what we did with Family Play last year where the CPU will control the player motion, and then you just worry about the gestures. But you can also have an All-Play solution that uses the nunchuk where...you're moving the player around with your nunchuk but you're able to perform gestures, as well. What we do is if you have an All-Play configuration...we do things like look at rule sets—does it make sense to have all sorts of penalties on? Probably not. Does it make sense to have the play clock on? Probably not. Those are a little hardcore and technical to take up. Does it make sense to maybe assist the player from "under the hood" a little bit? Yeah, it probably does. An example of that is that in last year's Madden; even if you were in Family Play, if you wanted to hit a player you had to do a very specific lunging gesture. The same [went] for when you're running the ball—you had to know all sorts of different gestures. What we decided this year is we're going to make it all contextual. In All-Play, you just do a gesture such as shake the Wii remote. It will decide for you in that moment, if you're running with the ball for instance, should I be juking here, should I do a power move, should I evade, or should I dive, based on the situation. It kind of makes the game a lot smarter under the hood, saying based on your experience level, here's all the things that will get in the way and make for a very frustrating experience with you; we're only going to include stuff that won't affect your engagement with the game and

NBA LIVE 09 ALL-PLAY



Hopefully Wii is suited for high altitudes—these guys might not be coming down for a while.





In NBA Live 09 All-Play, you can see the past and the future in one place. On one hand, the game looks to modernize with better Wii controls and approachable gameplay. On the other hand, the classic visual appeal that kept you plugging quarters into arcade machines during the '90s is back with a vengeance. Combining the two approaches sounds like a recipe for the first truly innovative basketball game in a long while. But all that innovation is meant only as a means to an end, says producer Kris Fulton. "NBA Live 09 is a game experience tailored for the Wii audience with an emphasis on interaction and fun—the real roots of gaming."

So much of a basketball player's skill is in technique—how he flicks jump shots or swipes at loose balls is how he gets paid. NBA Live 09 All-Play looks to capture those skills directly with Wii gestures that mimic many of the motions of the players on the court. In addition to scoring baskets and going for steals, fundamental actions such as dribble moves, shot fakes, and blocks are all performed via intuitive gestures. The previous NBA Live featured some of these gestures, but a more complete gesture system and a year of tweaking have enhanced the in-game experience dramatically. "We've improved the recognition rate and response time of all controls," Fulton promises. Individual skills aren't the only innovation, however. Using the Wii remote's pointer, you'll actually be able to control the game via screen icons. But in case these trailblazing styles have you beat, Live 09 also includes Classic mode, where you hold the Wii remote sideways.

Like the experience in Madden, the All-Play feature set is all about accessibility for all comers, regardless of how much time they've spent on the virtual court. Controller configurations are a big part of All-Play, letting people enjoy the game by not allowing the complex controls to get in the way. But simpler controls don't necessarily mean a lighter experience. Fulton explains, "All-Play is just as involving as our full 'Advanced' system of controls, and a player can now be just as competitive with either one." Miis play a big part in the All-Play experience, too—like a little bird sitting on your shoulder, your Mii will alert you to a double team, advise you when you're close enough to dunk, and let you know when you've found the perfect release point for your jump shot.

The graphical presentation also contributes to the All-Play experience. With five players per team in constant motion, it can often be difficult to tell who's who. Slightly exaggerated visual characteristics help identify an athlete's role. Fulton provides some examples: "Long, athletic blockers like Tayshaun Prince are tall and wiry; bruising power players like Shaquille O'Neal are simply huge; all-around athletes like LeBron James fall right in the middle. You no longer need an encyclopedic knowledge of the NBA and its players to immediately recognize the skills and abilities of your lineup on the floor." Graphical changes go beyond the shapes of the players, however—vibrant jerseys and detailed courts lend a greater feeling of immersion while not taking away the crucial accessibility factor.

In a clear homage to the high-flying dunktastic arcade hoops games of old, NBA Live 09 All-Play includes a 2-on-2 mode that features oversized players and absurd backboard-shattering jams—ideal for social play. And in case that doesn't get your friends to come over and ball with you, other minigames featuring your Miis will be included, as well.

For the hardcore hoops fan, there's still plenty to be excited about. First, the title's online capabilities are getting streamlined, making it much easier to get into games with your friends. "Finding an opponent and entering a game should be just as simple in the online space as it would be if they were sitting next to you on the couch, " Fulton asserts. And the NBA Live series is keeping up as basketball becomes more popular around the world; 24 international teams are represented in the new version.

Taking cues from old-school titles and new-school innovations, NBA Live 09 All-Play hopes to find the sweet spot with all audiences. "We have no doubt that every player will know that they're in for something different and fun this year," says Fulton. Fans can find out for themselves when NBA Live hits shelves this fall.

INTERVIEW CONTINUED

won't be affected by your talent level with the game. We're finding that in our testing...[that it's] really resonating with folks. You haven't dumbed down the game too much; you haven't taken too much control away from me. But wow, I feel that all the frustrating things in the full control schemes and all the rules and AI are all gone, and I'm really enjoying that experience, especially when I'm in a social player setting.

That's on the gameplay side of things, but All-Play is more than that. All-Play is other features—game modes, for instance—that contribute to a more accessible and fun experience. Take Madden: we have five-on-five, playground-style, four-downs-to-cover-the-whole-field, big-head football game experiences that are just fun and really simple to pick up and play. They're designed to take a lot of the worries out of the gameplay experience.

Going back to the control style, it sounds like there are only basic gestures to do a lot of tasks. How do you balance simplifying the controls with the difficulty of the game?

It isn't too much easier, really. Here's some insight into what we've found in our Wii research. When it comes to playing sports on Wii, people love doing gestures that really immerse them in the sport, because it feels like they're literally doing it. So in the case of Madden, people do love feeling like they're throwing a football. But when we give them other gestures that feel tacked on, it kind of removes them out of that immersion experience, and [they] feel like it's forced. So what we've done is taken out the things that feel

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 09 ALL-PLAY

"Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09 is not a simple port of the other Tiger games. It has been designed *specifically* to take advantage of the Wii hardware." These are comforting words from Jason Shenkman, producer of the newest Tiger game to hit Wii. A year of swing refinement, new features for adjusting your approach to the game, and fun online play are just some of the highlights to look forward to. Sprinkle in new courses and players, and Tiger Woods for Wii may vault itself into the must-have category of games this year.

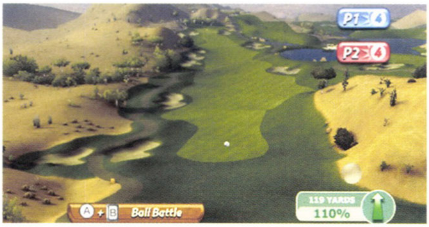
When it comes to video-game golf, the realistic feel of the swing is absolutely the most important aspect, and the Tiger Woods development team knows it. They have spent tons of effort giving the swing what Shenkman says is a one-to-one correlation to the player's actions. "You'll see your golfer move his club on the screen the same way that you move your Wii remote when swinging. This applies to all shot types, including putting," Shenkman notes. Thankfully, the issue of miss-hits from the first Tiger games on Wii (when you'd occasionally hit the ball before you were finished with your swing) has been addressed as well.

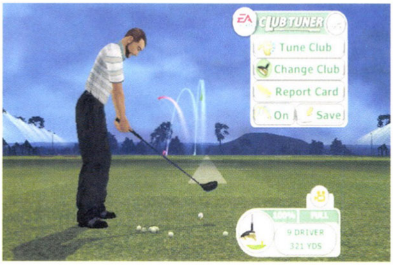
To accompany the improved hitting mechanics, the upcoming game introduces a feature called Club Tuner, which allows you to adjust every club in your bag to your liking—from the amount of draw or fade, to the loft, to how much power you must put into your shots. But Club Tuner won't necessarily make the game easier—you might have found the right setup to match your style, but it's still up to you to choose the correct club and make all the right shots.

Another feature new to the series is simultaneous online play. That means no more waiting for three faceless opponents to hack up a virtual golf course before you get your shot; everyone plays at the same time. "The way it works is that everyone plays on the same hole at the same time," Shenkman expands. "Each user can see the flight path of the other golfer's shots rendered in real time while they play through the hole." Not bad for the series' first shot at Wii online play!

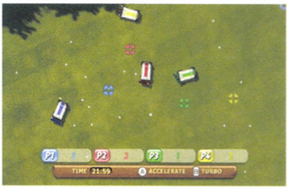
All-Play mode is not as much of a priority as it is in the rest of the EA Sports lineup because, as Shenkman tells us, "Golf is inherently an 'All-Play' sport to some degree already. The basics of swinging a club are pretty easy to understand, but a perfect swing is difficult to master." But All-Play can help you determine what will happen after you hit the ball. You can turn on a preview arc that shows where the ball will go if you hit it with full strength. Wonder if the wind is going to push your ball into a trap or whether your current club will sail you over the green? You can use the preview arc to improve your game, then turn it off once you get a feel for all the clubs in your bag.

The game isn't just about new play mechanics and techniques; more courses and players have been included for greater variety. In keeping with the growing international interest in golf, three of the five new courses are locations outside of North America: Sun City in South Africa, Sheshan in Shanghai, and Wentwroth in England. (And the two U.S. courses aren't bad either: Florida's Bay Hill and Nevada's Wolf Creek will challenge you in a number of ways.) The pool of playable golfers also comes from around the world, including notables Darren Clarke of Ireland and Se Ri Pak from South Korea. Of course, you'll really have to bring your game when you face Tiger. "We continue to make Tiger one of the toughest golfers to compete against. He's just a phenomenal athlete who continues to dominate the game in real life," Shenkman says. You can see if you've got what it takes to beat Tiger and your own friends when Tiger Woods PGA Tour 09 All-Play hits stores in August.





Spend a little time on the practice tee refining your swing with the Club Tuner before taking on Tiger himself.



INTERVIEW CONTINUED

forced, and things that make you stop and think, "Oh god, what was the juke gesture?" Instead, it's more natural as you're running down the field and you're facing a 300-pound lineman coming at you, to just wildly shake the remote to try to evade him. That's actually the natural response that you would do in that situation. It won't make the game any easier;...if you shake the Wii remote to do a juke you won't [automatically] have 100% success in getting around that player. There's timing elements to it; there's contextual elements to it. But we've taken what feels forced out of the equation. I wouldn't say that it's necessarily easier, just less frustrating.

You mentioned that players can choose whether to use the nunchuk or not during All-Play. How will it work with players playing head-to-head? Can players choose how much they want to get involved?

I can play nunchuk in or out in All-Play, and obviously if my nunchuk is out it's a different experience than having my nunchuk in. And if I just want to go full-on "hardcore" control scheme with the nunchuk I can do that, too. You and I can play head-to-head each with a different scheme. It levels the playing experience in a way that does not at all cheat more-experienced users. It just allows that less-experienced user to not have to turn to their buddy or dad or son or whoever they're playing and have to ask, "Oh, how do I do the juke thing again?" It takes all those frustrating moments out while not cheating either person. It really just focuses on the joy of playing the core game aspects, like passing and running and blocking.

HABITAT-FORMING

Serenity now! Create your own portable Eden with Viva Piñata: Pocket Paradise on DS.

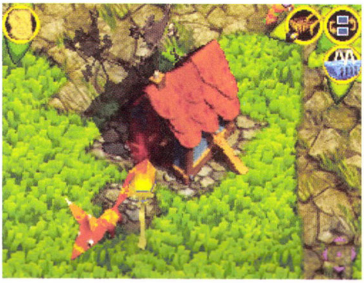
VIVA PIÑATA

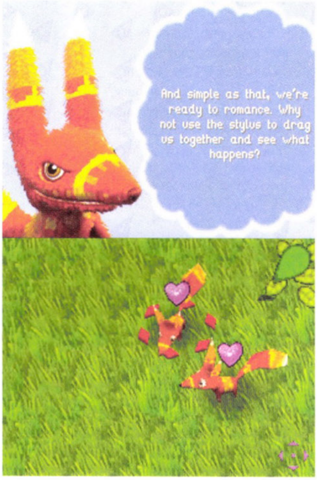
Even if you've never played Viva Piñata, you've probably at least heard of it; after all, there's an Xbox 360 game, and a computer-animated TV show that airs on Saturday mornings. Now, thanks to publisher THQ, the franchise is coming to DS as the new, slightly cheeky title Viva Piñata: Pocket Paradise—and it could very well be the definitive Viva Piñata experience.

For those who know the name but not the game, here's the rundown: Viva Piñata is all about building a garden to attract piñatas. These aren't your typical inanimate candy-filled papier-mâché effigies, however; the piñatas in this world are living, animal-inspired critters, and you're tasked with taking a barren, litter-laden plot of land and building a piñata sanctuary. The premise remains the same for the DS version, but the touch-screen hardware allows for features not possible on the Xbox 360. "We couldn't resist and kept thinking how great it would be if you could actually touch your

BY JUSTIN CHENG

PLAYER STATUS
DAVE
GOOD GARDENER
51
TAG
012345
456789
TIME ELAPSED
1587 DAYS
18 HOURS
33 MINUTES
GARDEN VALUE
4839




And simple as that, we're ready to romance. Why not use the stylus to drag us together and see what happens?

CHOOSE A PIÑATA

[Right] If you've met the specific requirements for romance, you can get your piñatas to multiply. Just make sure to give them some privacy by building them a house [above].

piñatas," says Paul Machacek, a producer at developer Rare. "The touch input is brilliant for controlling your tools. For instance, you can just 'draw' grass onto your garden with the grass-seed packet, or whack something directly with the shovel. You can even tickle your piñatas to make them happier. Using the touch screen also allows us to immediately provide all the information you need on the top screen for anything in the garden, so all the advice and requirements can be offered directly to you."

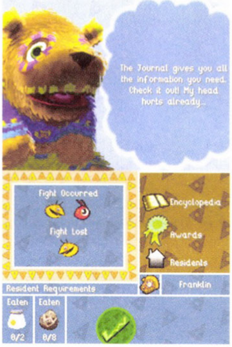
IF YOU BUILD IT...

Making your garden hospitable to piñatas is fairly straightforward. The first order of business is to use your shovel to smash the litter and clear the rubble. You simply tap the wheelbarrow icon to open the tools menu, select the appropriate tool, and get to work by dragging your stylus across the ground. Almost immediately, your first visitor, the wormlike Whirlm, appears and becomes a resident. If two Whirlms become residents, you can get them to "romance" each other, assuming you meet the requirements—in this case, building a Whirlm house.

Technically speaking, you don't build the house yourself; instead, you visit one of the many shops—by tapping the shopping-basket icon—and hire shopkeeper Willy Builder to do the work for you, leaving you free to tend to your garden. Luckily, the Whirlm house costs nothing—you don't have a lot of chocolate coins (Viva Piñata's currency) to spend at this point in the game. Once their home is complete, you can tap on one Whirlm and drag your stylus to another to initiate the mating ritual, resulting in a prerendered cut-scene of the two Whirlms dancing and eventually—after a visit by egg-deliverer Storkos—another Whirlm for your garden.

Of course, it would get pretty boring to simply raise Whirlms, but it's just a stepping-stone. The early bird gets the worm, the adage goes, and so it is in Pocket Paradise: the Whirlms will draw the avian Sparrowmints. You may have to sacrifice a Whirlm or two, but hey, it's the circle of life. Like all of the piñatas, defeated Whirlms explode into delicious candy that predators readily consume.

As in the real-life animal kingdom, there are some herbivores—Bunnycombs and Mousemallows hunger for nothing more than carrots and turnips, respectively. To get these healthy treats, you'll need to either grow them yourself or purchase the veggies from the general store. Growing your own takes longer, but it's cheaper: the Johnny Appleseed-esque Seedos occasionally stops by and offers free seeds. Naturally, to get a successful crop you'll need to nurture the seeds, ensuring that you don't over- or underwater them. If you have a surplus of crops, you can sell them for chocolate coins to purchase new objects to improve your garden and entice even more piñatas.


The Journal gives you all the information you need. Check it out! My head hurts already...
Fight Occurred
Fight Lost
Encyclopedia
Awards
Residents
Resident Requirements
Franklin
Eaten
0/2
Eaten
0/8

Good old seeds. Plant 'em, water 'em and watch 'em grow!
Seeds

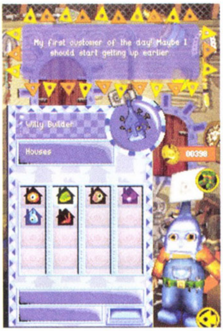
Piñata Ill
Egg Delivered
193
Gardener Level 3
9.88%
Garden Terrain %
Terrain
Rubble/Path
5%
Dirt
18%
Grass
77%

Bunnycomb
INFORMATION
Level
Base Value
2
600
REQUIREMENTS
Appear
or
Visit
Resident
Romance
Variant

In case you would rather just play around in a garden without investing a lot of time, Pocket Paradise has a new Playground mode, where you have a readymade garden and can build pretty much whatever you want on it to attract all kinds of piñatas at no chocolate-coin cost. It's good for playing in short bursts, but it doesn't feel as rewarding as crafting a garden from scratch.

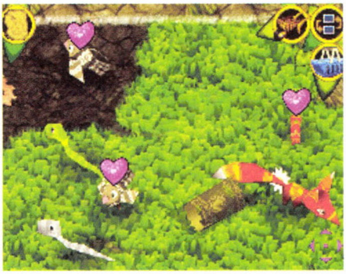
VIVA DS

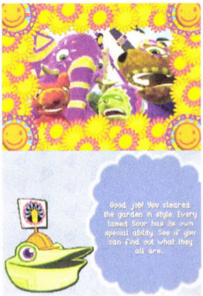
You might think the developers had to make concessions to bring such a deep game to the handheld, but Machacek says otherwise. "Although the view has changed, the graphics still look incredible, as their starting point was a more-powerful console and a team with very high standards.... The graphics of plants growing had to be prerendered and stored on the DS game card, which was expensive for us to do in terms of memory usage. As a result, we modified the various times/ways you could fertilize plants. The only area where we actually reduced anything was in the number of variants per piñata—one each on DS as opposed to three each before—and the romancing games themselves, which we have not included, though we modified the requirements before romancing can take place. However, with seven brand-new piñatas and various extras added, this is a huge game to play through." Neither THQ nor Rare will comment on the new piñatas at this time, but Machacek offers a hint: "I don't want to spoil anything for anyone, but suffice it to say there's a rumor that the long-lost Jeli may occasionally be seen in a garden. However, it appears he may be pretty shy...I'm not sure if he appears in the game or whether I just dreamed him; you'll have to find out for yourselves."



My first customer of the day! Maybe I should start getting up earlier.

[Left] Need a domicile made? Shopkeeper Willy Builder will help you out. [Below] If you're a fan of the TV show, you'll see many familiar faces in the game.





Good job! You cleared the garden in style. Every tamed Sour has its own special ability. See if you can find out what they all are.

Assuming such a piñata exists, you'll be able to prove to your friends that he's become a resident of your garden thanks to the game's local-wireless functionality. "Viva Piñata: Pocket Paradise allows you to package up piñatas and other things in your garden into crates and ship them off to other gardens," Machacek explains. "Those gardens could be saved on your DS game card, or if you wirelessly connect to another local DS you can ship them to a garden on another DS game card." While you can get stuff from your friends, Machacek says there won't be any downloadable content. However, he assures us, "Given how large the game is, and how much extra we have added to it, further content didn't seem necessary." Based on what we've played so far, we're inclined to agree; you can judge for yourself when the game hits this fall.

FAMILIAR FACES

Fans of the 4Kids TV program will be pleased to know that Viva Piñata: Pocket Paradise ties in with the show. "We've included [12] clips from the TV series in the game, and some of the prime TV characters—Hudson, Fergy, etc.—present the Episodes sections of the game," Machacek tells us. "You'll see the connections to the cartoon series as soon as you switch the game on." For Viva Piñata newbies, here are profiles of some of the show's main characters.

Hudson Horstachio
Perhaps the most famous of all the piñatas, Hudson is known for being a bit egotistical. Still, he's popular enough to take first place in the 4Kids Viva Piñata poll.

Franklin Fizzlybear
Franklin's laid-back attitude and surfer-speak might make you think he's not the brightest bulb—and you'd be right, for the most part. But he's occasionally surprisingly intelligent, and like George Washington, he cannot tell a lie.

Fergy Fudgehog
Piñatas love candy, but no one loves it more than Fergy does. Unlike the similarly named singer/actress Fergie, however, Fergy is frightened by parties.

Paulie Pretztail
A good cook and one of the smartest of the bunch, Paulie, like Fergy, dislikes parties—though he's not terrified of them—and avoids them as often as possible.

Les Galagoogoo
The others may not be able to understand the words coming out of Les Galagoogoo's mouth, but the irony is that he's actually the wisest piñata of them all.

Ella Elephanilla
They say an elephant—or in this case, an Elephanilla—never forgets, but apparently no one told the constantly forgetful Ella. At least she remembers that she adores ballet dancing and peanuts.

From Bowser to Zelda:
Master all Brawl's fighters
gr.

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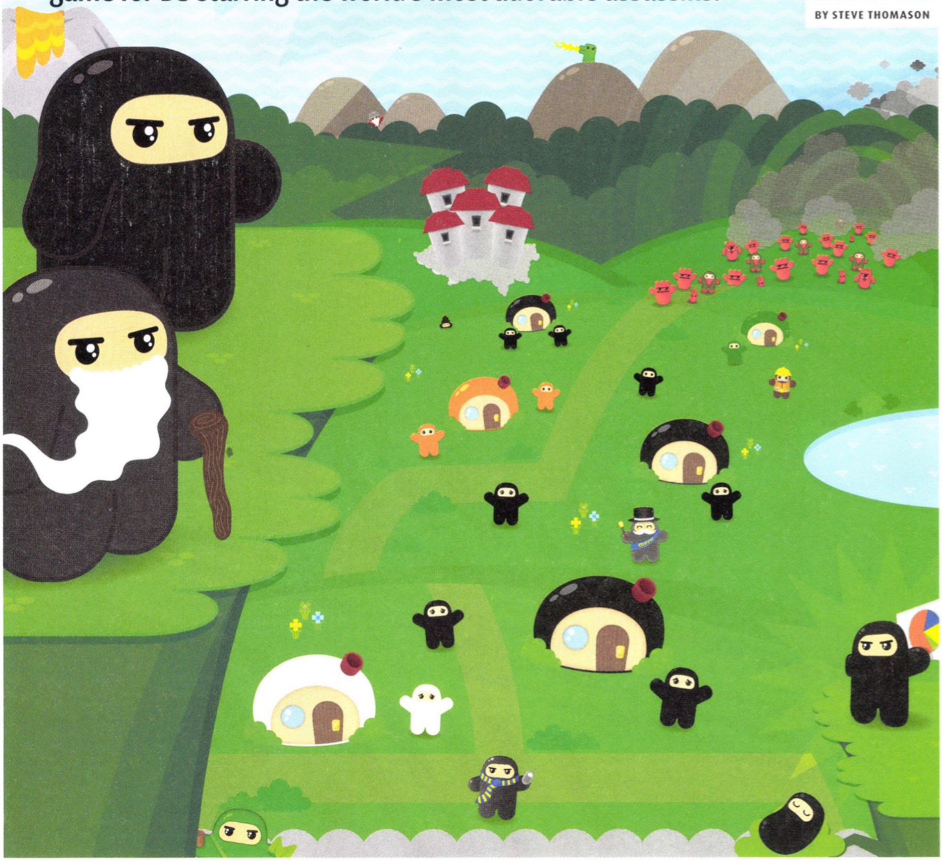
TOWN BRAWL

Pack your bags for an exclusive trip to Ninjatown, a real-time strategy game for DS starring the world's most adorable assassins.

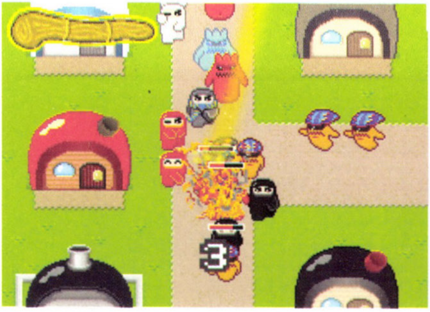
BY STEVE THOMASON

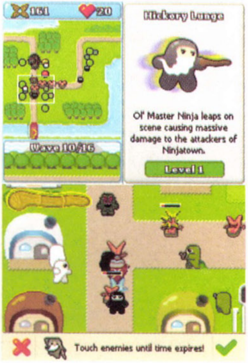


If you're anything like me, the first thought that pops into your head upon hearing the name Ninjatown is "Wow, that sounds like a much more awesome place to live than my home city/burg/fanatical religious compound!" And on most days, that's probably true. But during our time there, Ninjatown was under attack by hordes of ferocious (yet oh-so-cute) Wee Devils. Fortunately, as one might expect, a municipality populated entirely by ninjas is better equipped than most to ward off such a threat.

Your objective in Ninjatown is simple—prevent the Wee Devils from reaching the town gate. Your primary means of defense in this noble endeavor is the construction of ninja huts. These huts come in many different varieties, and each produces its own unique brand of ninja. The early level that we played offered two types of melee ninja and three types of ranged ninja. Likewise, the Wee Devils come in many different forms, and successfully defending your town is largely contingent on pitting the right type of ninja against a particular foe. Only the superbuff Anti-Ninja can break through the strong defenses of armored devils, for instance, but they're too slow

Don't let their lovable appearance fool you; when it comes time for battle, these ninjas are relentless.





Ol' Master Ninja leaps on scene causing massive damage to the attackers of Ninjatown.

Touch enemies until time expires!

to keep up with slippery devils. The obvious way to bring down those elusive foes is to chip away at them with the speedier-yet-weaker Wee Ninja. If the enemy attacks in great numbers, though, you may find yourself overwhelmed. A more effective strategy is to use two types of ninja in tandem—freeze the slippery devils with snow-powered White Ninjas, enabling your Anti-Ninjas to quickly smash them to pieces. As you progress through the game, you'll unlock additional flavors of the diminutive warriors, including the efficiency-obsessed Business Ninja, and the more-domestic Baker Ninja, who can make delicious ninja-star cookies that act as the game's currency.

Your principle source of cookies comes from defeating enemies, however, which lends the game an increasingly frantic pace. The more enemies you conquer, the more huts you can build, which in turn allows the developers to throw even mores foes at you. Eventually, skirmishes break out simultaneously all over the battlefield, and you have to balance your forces to defend multiple fronts effectively. You can also spend cookies to upgrade existing huts (thus spawning ninjas with greater capabilities) or to construct special modifier buildings. Two such structures were available to us in the demo: a Dojo and a Temple. The former increases the attack power of ninjas produced by adjacent huts. The latter speeds up your ability to call on Ol' Master Ninja, the town's cranky elder who possesses such devastating powers as Hickory Lunge (tap as many enemies as possible in three seconds to inflict heavy damage) and Get Off My Lawn (blow into the microphone to send your foes flying).

Though our stay in Ninjatown was brief, we're already itching for a return visit. The game does a nice job of walking that line between accessibility and depth; the controls and core mechanics are simple and intuitive, but there's enough variety to keep things interesting. You can take your own trip to Ninjatown when it sneaks into stores this fall.

THE MAN BEHIND THE NINJA

The cuddly inhabitants of Ninjatown originated as Shawnimals, a popular line of designer plush toys. Though creator Shawn Smith worked for a competing games magazine in a previous life (its initials include the letters *E*, *G*, and *M*), he was kind enough to answer our questions about his latest endeavor.

NINTENDO POWER Tell us about the origins of Ninjatown. How did the idea for the game come about?

SHAWN SMITH Having drawn characters of all shapes and sizes for as long as I can remember, over the years those went from being doodles in the margins of my school notebook to more detailed and thoughtful drawings. Eventually, I really focused on character design and illustration, and because of my background in writing, the stories that went along with these characters.

Ninjatown was one of the first fully realized sets of characters I created along with the little town they lived in. Originally created for Shawnimals, we made some really limited-edition plush toys and other Ninjatown merchandise. Word spread, and we got a ton of interest from people and stores, and it grew from there.

In 2006 I met Cashmere Productions through mutual friends, and we talked generally about a Ninjatown game—a "wouldn't it be cool if" kind of conversation. Through some emails and phone calls, we worked out the basic idea of the gameplay, and talked to SouthPeak about it. They were totally into it from the get go. The whole process is both amazing and surreal for me, not only seeing my creations come to life in this way, but coming full circle back into the gaming industry—except now from the other side.

How do you come up with designs for new characters?

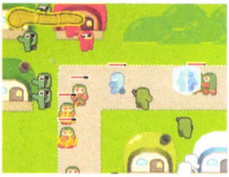
There's no real formula, but I just try to be observant constantly. Ideas can literally come from anywhere and anything, whether it's something visual, or a string of nonsensical words I see at the bus stop, an overheard conversation, or something I see while driving. Transforming these random things into characters and stories that fit into my world, whether they're for Ninjatown or some other Shawnimals project, is the tricky part. Sometimes they work, sometimes they don't. Either way, my running paper- and brain-based archive of such things grows larger and larger all the time. Eventually I will lose my mind.

Do you worry that by making the ninjas so adorable you might incite the wrath of real-life ninjas who have worked so hard to establish their deadly reputation?

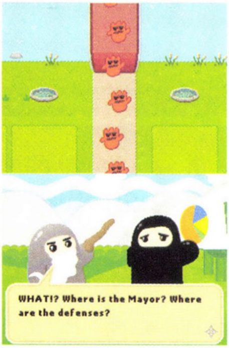
I hadn't thought of it before, but that's a really good point. Hmm... maybe those little kanji scrolls left under my windshield wiper were death threats!

What kind of ninja would you consider yourself to be?

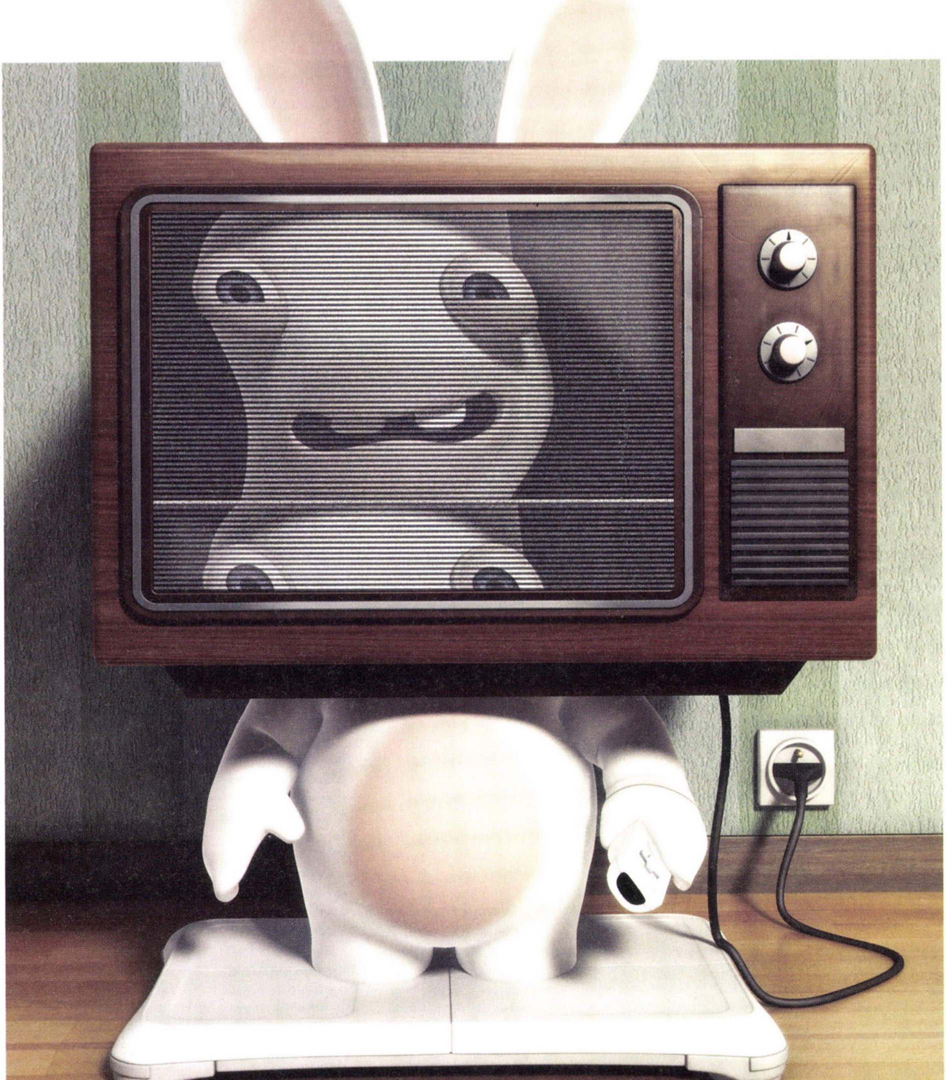
Hermit Ninja? No, Bearded Ninja! My skill would be extremely efficient and honorable facial-hair growth. Maybe I could even use my beard as a grappling hook, to escape from dangerous situations like when I buy new games without telling my wife.



[Below] The weapon of choice for Business Ninjas: pie charts.



WHAT!? Where is the Mayor? Where are the defenses?

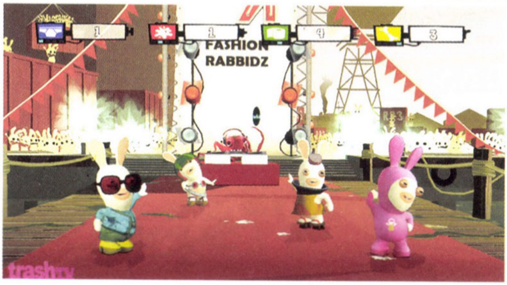


BY STEVE THOMASON

IRREGULARLY SCHEDULED PROGRAMMING

The Rabbids are back and this time they're taking over the boob tube in *Rayman Raving Rabbids TV Party*.

Rabbids take their fashion very seriously. We hope to see that bikini top, flip-flop, and watermelon helmet ensemble on a future episode of *Project Runway*.



First they invaded Rayman's world, then they conquered Earth. This holiday, the maniacal Rabbids have their sights set on the most sacred realm of all—television. The latest installment in the popular Rayman Raving Rabbids series spoofs all things idiot box with more than 65 new minigames, many of which utilize the Wii Balance Board. To learn more about the world's first game that you can play with your butt, we spoke to development team member and marketing manager Adrian Lacey.

NINTENDO POWER Can you tell us a bit about the story and the overall structure of the single-player mode?

ADRIAN LACEY They have invaded the world, and now...your TV screens! The Rabbids need your help to disrupt our daily diet of TV delicacies and drive Rayman dingy! That's right! The Rabbids have taken over the tube and show up to bring down the house on every show you can imagine! Ads, music, series, movies! Whatever strikes a Rabbid's raving fancy! In Story mode you'll play through a week's worth of television; each day brings new and crazier challenges combining skill and insane movements in a compilation of minigames.

What new party modes can players expect?

There is a variety of ways to play with family and friends. You can play many games with up to four players simultaneously and with as many as eight friends on a turn-by-turn basis. Since the all-new Balance Board is built for one player, we have developed games that combine the use of the board with the Wii remote so that friends can help or hinder the board player. We also introduce a nasty little Sabotage feature...but we'll save that one for later!

How does the team come up with new ideas for minigames?

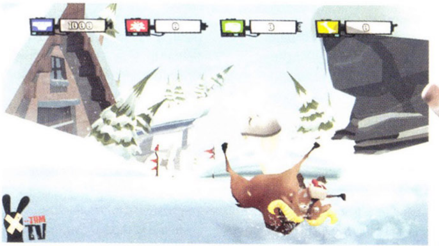
We do a lot of prototyping in the early stages to find crazy movements and get a feel for how the player will experience the controllers and the Balance Board. We treat the Wii remote and nunchuk as an extension of your hands. With the Balance Board, we liked to think of it as an extension of your bum. This means the player understands the movement instinctively and it feels natural, regardless of the insane activities the Rabbids are undertaking onscreen. We had a slightly different approach to the Balance Board.... Players can perform all of the most obvious actions we'd expect from a board, like balancing and shifting your weight to perform tasks. But we also wanted to use the board in unexpected ways, including a series of games that you play with your rear end.

Can you give us some examples of minigames that are new to TV Party? And how about minigames that take advantage of the Wii Balance Board?

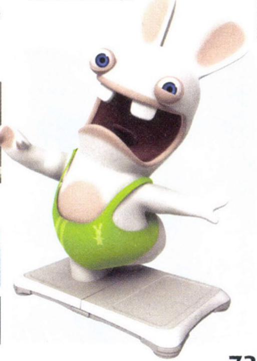
I don't want to give too much away just yet, but on the Xtreme Sports channel you will take winter sports in a whole new direction by riding a live wildebeest down an Olympic ski slope. By using your butt on the Balance Board, you will guide the hairy beast through the course and even hotdog it off a few jumps to show off your moves, including some midflight flirting...with the wildebeest!

What lessons did you learn from the second Rayman Raving Rabbids that you've been able to apply to TV Party?

The second RRR was all about multiplayer; we wanted people to push and shove each other onscreen and off. This worked really well, as the Wii is especially fun when you are playing with others. This time we really want individual players to enjoy the multiplayer gameplay, but also offer single players games that require skill and the kind of depth that challenges you as you get better and better.



Raving Rabbids' developers have a new tool in their neverending quest for your self-imposed humiliation: the Wii Balance Board.



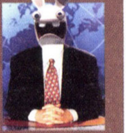
ON THE HARE

As the Rabbids get set to take over the airwaves, we humbly offer a few suggestions for their primetime lineup.

AMERICAN IDOL

The Raving Rabbids series has already featured musical performances, and the titular bunnies have at least as much talent as Paula Abdul. Plus we'd love to shove a plunger in Simon's face.

THE NEWS HOUR WITH JIM LEHRER



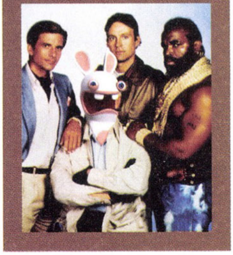
It's an election year, so it's especially important to keep up with current events. Why Jim Lehrer? Because even crazed lagomorphs know better than to trust Fox News.

CSI: MIAMI

Everyone loves a good crime drama, and who better for the Rabbids to learn from than the greatest thespian of our time, David Caruso? And you could make a minigame out of putting on his sunglasses.

THE A-TEAM

Ten years ago, a crack commando unit was sent to prison by a limbless tyrant for a crime they didn't commit. These bunnies promptly escaped from a maximum-security stockade to the Los Angeles underground. Today, still wanted by the government, they survive as rabbits of fortune. If you have a problem, if no one else can help, and if you have carrots, maybe you can hire...BWWAHHHH!!!



Is it just us, or are the Rabbids more entertaining than half of our real-life sitcom stars?

Will the full-motion video (FMV) first-person shooting segments return?
Yes, although not in FMV. This time you'll be shooting up movie sets while the director is trying to get their movie made. Thing is, you can never be sure if you're actually helping to get the movie made or destroying any chance of it ever getting to the box office!

How have the music minigames been updated, and what kinds of music can players expect? Will we still get the goofy Rabbid versions of popular songs?
Music is a big part of the game... and a huge favorite of the development team. These are priceless moments when you find out which of your friends has absolutely *no* sense of rhythm and even your dad's dancing starts to look decent! We're not ready to talk about the track list quite yet but it will be tons of fun.

What are some ways in which you'll be spoofing TV culture? Will there be different stations or channels? How will we see certain genres represented—reality shows or sitcoms, for example?
It's still a secret, but you can expect to see everything from a weather channel to music television, from movie channels to trash TV!

We understand that the game will include commercial breaks. Are those interactive?
Absolutely! If you suck at a game, you can call up a TV ad that will give you a chance to make up for your pathetic performance. Also, in multiplayer mode the winning player will usually get to control the TV remote; but you can challenge them via a short TV program in order to get it back.

We've also been told that TV Party will be broken down into many types of gameplay, including shaking, precision, dexterity, and balance. Are there any others in addition to these, and can you talk a little bit about the overarching idea behind this breakdown?
[The others are] rhythm, combos, acting, and stepping. The combinations are key, since the challenges follow the principle of rubbing your tummy and patting your head at the same time. This allows the more-skilled players to progress farther and discover new challenges that really allow them to explore the controls.

What role does Rayman play in the game? Why are the Rabbids now the protagonists?
This time you will be manipulating the Rabbids to drive Rayman crazy...it's more of a cameo appearance for Rayman. The Rabbids are the TV fetishists! This is their world to spoof and parody. Rayman's got some more serious business to take care of. Or some more pressing plans for the near future....

Will the game feature any sort of online functionality?
Yes, you have a customization section where you have to dress your Rabbid in ridiculous outfits in response to Rabbid quiz questions. Obviously he wriggles and squirms around a fair bit, so you need to smack him one and quickly take his photo. You can then send and post your photos with others. We have also included online scoreboards so you can show off a little as well!

There have been lots of minigame compilations on Wii, but few seem to resonate with gamers as well as the Rayman Raving Rabbids series. What do you think is the key to making a successful minigame collection for Wii?
The teams that work on the series are gamers themselves, so although they are "minigames," we aim to make sure both newcomers and existing gamers get the most enjoyment out of the games as possible. We've given many of the games enough depth that players will feel a real progression and actually learn and grow as a player. Another key is that we don't take things too seriously; we have been making games for a long time and we focus on the "laugh out loud" factor. It's about rediscovering the kinds of ridiculous stuff you used to do as a kid when your parents weren't looking; the difference is that now it's the parents who look ridiculous playing!

Is there anything else you'd like our readers to know about Rayman Raving Rabbids TV Party?
Going to the gym and watching TV will simply never feel normal again.

Finally, can you please include an *A-Team* parody in the game?
No promises, but I will see how Mr. T feels about becoming a Rabbid!

N4G

news for gamers

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HOTTEST Wii News

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Parthenon Power?

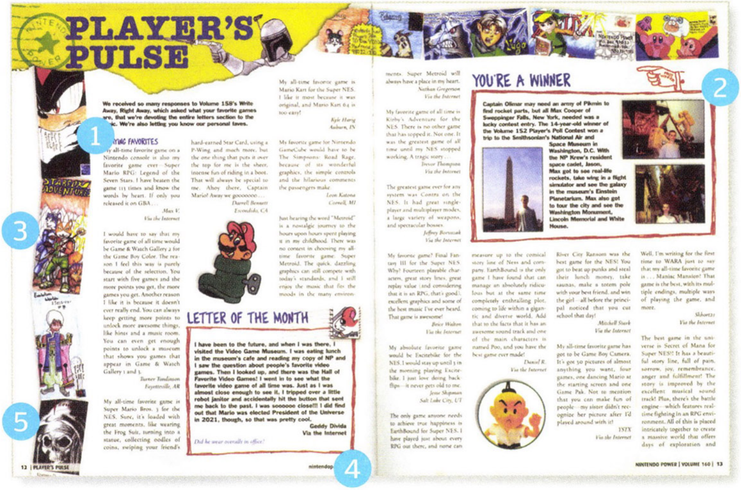
UNLIKE THE MIGHTY stone pillars erected by ancient civilizations to hold their roofs aloft, columns in modern magazines don't often stand the test of time so well. Most of the monthly columns once found in Nintendo Power have crumbled into dust, although some have made curtain calls or reappeared in new forms. Columns provide ongoing coverage of a particular subject, so if that subject loses its relevance the column is dropped. Game Boy a-Go-Go, for instance, was one-stop shopping for Game Boy titles, including an overview and game tips, but it would garner little interest in today's DS-oriented world. Even so, some of the most memorable content in NP's first 20 years appeared in columns. This month, we fondly glance back at some of those relics and look for signs of what their demise tells us about gaming and society.

BY SCOTT PELLAND

Player's Pulse

VOL.160 • SEP 2002

One of the longest-running columns was Player's Pulse, which featured reader letters, envelope art, and the Artist's Gallery. The letters portion of the column survives today simply as Pulse, but the much-loved large-scale displays of art were dropped in 2005 with the magazine's redesign. There were several reasons for the exclusion of reader art, including the desire to present the magazine with a more mature face, but there were practical concerns, as well, such as often not having enough quality art to fill the space. Since then, fans have found new ways to express their artistic aspirations in NP's Community column.



PLAYER'S PULSE

We received so many responses to Volume 158's Write Away, Right Away, which asked what your favorite games are, that we're devoting the entire letters section to the ic. We're also letting you know our personal faves.

YING FAVORITES

y all-time favorite game on a Nintendo console is also my favorite game ever—Super Mario RPG: Legend of the Seven Stars. I have beaten the game 113 times and know the words by heart. If only you released it on GBA . . .

Max V.
Via the Internet

I would have to say that my favorite game of all time would be Game & Watch Gallery 2 for the Game Boy Color. The reason I feel this way is purely because of the selection. You start with five games and the more points you get, the more games you get. Another reason I like it is because it doesn't ever really end. You can always keep getting more points to unlock more awesome things, like hints and a music room. You can even get enough points to unlock a museum that shows you games that appear in Game & Watch Gallery 1 and 3.

Turner Tomlinson
Fayetteville, AR

My all-time favorite game is Super Mario Bros. 3 for the NES. Sure, it's loaded with great moments, like wearing the Frog Suit, turning into a statue, collecting oodles of coins, swiping your friend's hard-earned Star Card, using a P-Wing and much more, but the one thing that puts it over the top for me is the sheer, intense fun of riding in a boot. That will always be special to me. Ahoy there, Captain Mario! Away we goooooooo . . .

Darrell Bennett
Escondido, CA

My all-time favorite game is Mario Kart for the Super NES. I like it most because it was original, and Mario Kart 64 is too easy!

Kyle Harig
Auburn, IN

My favorite game for Nintendo GameCube would have to be The Simpsons: Road Rage, because of its wonderful graphics, the simple controls and the hilarious comments the passengers make.

Leon Katona
Cornell, MI

Just hearing the word "Metroid" is a nostalgic journey to the hours upon hours spent playing it in my childhood. There was no contest in choosing my all-time favorite game: Super Metroid. The quick, dazzling graphics can still compete with today's standards, and I still enjoy the music that fits the moods in the many environments. Super Metroid will always have a place in my heart.

Nathan Gregerson
Via the Internet

LETTER OF THE MONTH

I have been to the future, and when I was there, I visited the Video Game Museum. I was eating lunch in the museum's cafe and reading my copy of NP and I saw the question about people's favorite video games. Then I looked up, and there was the Hall of Favorite Video Games! I went in to see what the favorite video game of all time was. Just as I was almost close enough to see it, I tripped over a little robot janitor and accidentally hit the button that sent me back to the past. I was soooooo close!!! I did find out that Mario was elected President of the Universe in 2021, though, so that was pretty cool.

Geddy Divida
Via the Internet

Did he wear overalls in office?

12 | PLAYER'S PULSE

nintendop

My favorite game of all time is Kirby's Adventure for the NES. There is no other game that has topped it. Not one. It was the greatest game of all time until my NES stopped working. A tragic story . . .

Trevor Thompson
Via the Internet

The greatest game ever for any system was Contra on the NES. It had great single-player and multiplayer modes, a large variety of weapons, and spectacular bosses.

Jeffrey Boruszak
Via the Internet

My favorite game? Final Fantasy III for the Super NES. Why? Fourteen playable characters, great story lines, great replay value (and considering that it is an RPG, that's good), excellent graphics and some of the best music I've ever heard. That game is awesome!

Brice Walton
Via the Internet

My absolute favorite game would be Excitebike for the NES. I would stay up until 3 in the morning playing Excitebike. I just love doing back flips—it never gets old to me.

Jesse Shipman
Salt Lake City, UT

The only game anyone needs to achieve true happiness is EarthBound for Super NES. I have played just about every RPG out there, and none can measure up to the comical story line of Ness and company. EarthBound is the only game I have found that can manage an absolutely ridiculous but at the same time completely enthralling plot, coming to life within a gigantic and diverse world. Add that to the facts that it has an awesome sound track and one of the main characters is named Poo, and you have the best game ever made!

Daniel R.
Via the Internet

YOU'RE A WINNER

Captain Olimar may need an army of Pikmin to find rocket parts, but all Max Cooper of Sweppinger Falls, New York, needed was a lucky contest entry. The 14-year-old winner of the Volume 152 Player's Poll Contest won a trip to the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C. With the NP Krew's resident space cadet, Jason, Max got to see real-life rockets, take wing in a flight simulator and see the galaxy in the museum's Einstein Planetarium. Max also got to tour the city and see the Washington Monument, Lincoln Memorial and White House.

River City Ransom was the best game for the NES! You got to beat up punks and steal their lunch money, take saunas, make a totem pole with your best friend, and win the girl—all before the principal noticed that you cut school that day!

Mitchell Stark
Via the Internet

My all-time favorite game has got to be Game Boy Camera. It's got 30 pictures of almost anything you want, four games, one dancing Mario at the starting screen and one Game Pak. Not to mention that you can make fun of people—my sister didn't recognize her picture after I'd played around with it!

YSTX
Via the Internet

Well, I'm writing for the first time to WARA just to say that my all-time favorite game is . . . Maniac Mansion! That game is the best, with its multiple endings, multiple ways of playing the game, and more.

Slshort21
Via the Internet

The best game in the universe is Secret of Mana for Super NES!! It has a beautiful story line, full of pain, sorrow, joy, remembrance, anger and fulfillment! The story is improved by the excellent musical sound track! Plus, there's the battle engine—which features real-time fighting in an RPG environment. All of this is placed intricately together to create a massive world that offers days of exploration and

NINTENDO POWER | VOLUME 160 | 13

1 September 2002 was an unusually rich month for reader art. No matter what characters or franchises were your favorites, there seemed to be a stylish depiction from a fan, or in the case of the professional-looking Shadow the Hedgehog envelope, possibly a member of Sega's art staff.

2 Player's Pulse was also where we showcased Player's Poll Sweepstakes winners, such as Max Cooper, who visited the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum in D.C. with staffer Jason Leung. When polled most recently, the majority of readers indicated that their first-prize preference was to win games, which indicates either that they don't fully appreciate how much fun it is to hang with the NP crew or that being frisked by TSA airport security has lost its romance.

3 Fox McCloud may strike a heroic pose on this envelope, but as most Star Fox fans will attest, it was a mistake to take the pilot out of the Arwing in Star Fox Adventures for GameCube. Even Fox looks a bit embarrassed in this rendering.

4 You gotta love it when readers write in about their out-of-body experiences, such as Geddy's trip to the future Video Game Museum. Although shunted back to reality before glimpsing the all-time favorite video game, Geddy learned that Mario will be elected President of the Universe in 2021. With space-warping technology apparently just around the corner, I'm saving up for a nice spread on Mars.

5 Always a favorite of the NP staff, Castlevania depictions rarely were as haunting as this black-and-white tribute. I have to wonder what the postal workers who handled this stuff thought was going on at Nintendo Power.

OF NINTENDO POWER

#7 IN OUR YEARLONG CELEBRATION OF NINTENDO POWER'S CLASSIC MOMENTS

George & Rob's Now Playing

VOL. 39 • AUG 1992

NP's Now Playing game review column has gone through so many facelifts over the years that it's hard to remember it once featured the sketched mugs of critics George Sinfield and Rob Noel. The fireworks you might have expected from this format failed to materialize as both George and Rob were easygoing guys who agreed with each other more often than they differed. It was a more primitive time, of course, in which trash talk had not yet replaced intelligent debate as a means of winning advocacy.

Celebrity Profile

VOL. 3 • NOV/DEC 1988

I can't tell you why we sought validation from Hollywood personalities, but Nintendo Power once made a monthly effort to find celebrities who were willing to chat about their gaming interests while promoting their latest TV or movie project. Jay Leno, Fred Savage, Michael Dorn, and Tori Spelling were a few of the celebs of the day to walk down our red carpet, where we learned such titillating facts as this: Jay once called Nintendo's game-counselor hotline for help playing level seven of the Legend of Zelda. No joke.

Power On

VOL.154 • MAR 2002

Before Community took shape and long after NES Journal bit the dust, Power On was the eclectic, catch-all column, where anything was fair game. Screen Test first appeared in its pages, along with all sorts of puzzles, nutty interviews, nostalgia, and even trash talk guaranteed to humiliate loved ones and alienate friends—such as the following gem: "That's funny—your Controller *seems* to be plugged in."

COLUMNOGRAPHY

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Classified Information
Counselors' Corner
Epic Center
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NES Achievers
NES Journal
Pak Watch
Player's Pulse
Pokécenter
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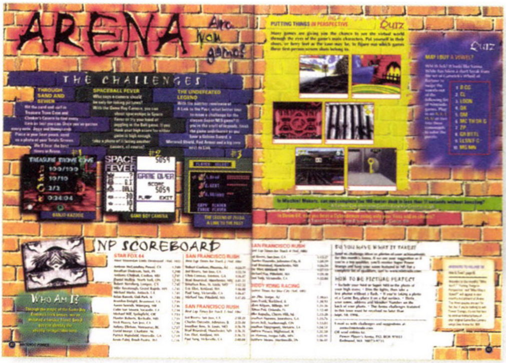
Take 2
Top 30/Top 20
Video Shorts
Video Spotlight



NES Achievers/Arena

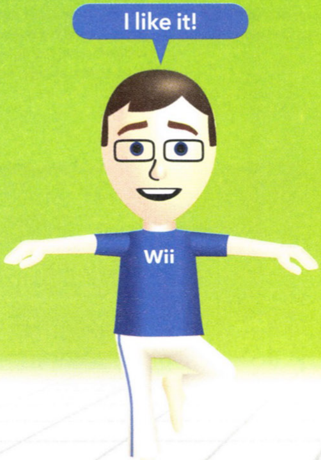
VOL. 111 • AUG 1998

Remember when the goal of most games was to earn a high score? You really knew where you stood when an eight-year-old from Jersey City doubled your total in Arkanoid. The real trick to getting your name on the NES Achievers high-scoring list was to take a good picture of your TV screen with a camera. Even years later when we revisited the player-achievement column concept with Arena, in which we posed various challenges for gamers, capturing the magic moment was still the key, although by then some people recorded their amazing feats on tape and sent that in. We had cabinets filled with photos and tapes that were submitted. Giving the boot to Arena was one of the most pro-environment moves we ever made.

NINTENDO POWER SWEEPSTAKES
JULY 2008

Win Wii Fit!

Get fit the fun way with Wii Fit™!


I like it!
Wii

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GRAND PRIZE

1 WINNER!

If you keep slipping into that permanent dip in your couch, this month's sweepstakes offers the best reason yet to get moving. With your own copy of Nintendo's revolutionary Wii Fit and the pressure-sensitive Wii Balance Board™ accessory, you won't have any more excuses for lying around. We'll even toss in a new Wii™ console to play the software, and your personal Wii Fit trainer will help you stick with the program and get toned.

SECOND PRIZE

10 WINNERS!

Remember the old days, when twitching your thumbs was the only workout you'd get playing video games? No more. Wii Fit is all about being active. Each second-prize winner will receive one copy of Wii Fit and the pressure-sensitive Wii Balance Board™ accessory to help get them moving. But if you want a chance to win, you've got to get off your butt and send in an entry. Move it or lose it!

TO ENTER: Send us a postcard listing your full name, mailing address, phone number, and email address (if you have one). Address it as follows:

Nintendo Power Sweepstakes V. 230
c/o Future US
1000 Marina Blvd., STE 510
Brisbane, CA 94005

OFFICIAL RULES

1. No purchase is necessary to win and as a contestant you have not yet won. Entries must be received no later than August 1, 2008. The winners will be chosen on or about August 17, 2008, and will be notified by e-mail (or regular mail). The odds of winning depend upon the number of entries received. The sponsor of the contest is Future US, Inc. ("Future US"), 1000 Marina Blvd., STE 510 Brisbane, CA 94005. Future US cannot be responsible for lost, late, misdirected, or incomplete entries, nor shall it be liable for unsuccessful efforts to notify a winner.

2. The prizes are the following: The prize that is available for one (1) contestant is one Wii™ console (of which the MSRP is $249.99) and one retail copy of the Wii Fit™ software bundled with the Wii Balance Board™ (of which the MSRP is $89.99). The prize that is available for ten (10) contestants is one retail copy of the Wii Fit™ software bundled with the Wii Balance Board™ (the MSRP for each bundle is $89.99). The prizes are nontransferable and no substitutions will be allowed.

3. Winners will be determined by a single random drawing of all valid entries and the decision of Future US shall be final. You may obtain the name of the winner by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to the address above. Future US reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to cancel or suspend this drawing should causes beyond its control corrupt the administration, security, or proper play of the drawing.

4. It is not necessary to buy Nintendo Power magazine to become a contestant. Everyone who mails in an entry will be considered as participants.

5. Entrants must be at least 13 years of age. If a winner is a minor, the prize will be awarded in the name of winner's parent or legal guardian, who is solely responsible for all applicable federal, state and local taxes, and that winner must also provide a signed parental or guardian consent form, provided by the sponsor, within 7 days of notification attempt. Failure of the minor to return the guardian consent form will result in the forfeiture of the prize and selection of an alternate winner, who will be chosen through a random drawing from the remaining eligible entries.

6. Return of any prize or prize notification as undeliverable will result in disqualification and an alternate winner will be selected.

7. The winners may be required to sign an affidavit of eligibility/release of liability/prize acceptance within seven days of receipt; failure to do so upon request will result in forfeiture of the prize. By acceptance of the prize, the winners agree to the use of their name and/or likeness for purposes of advertising, trade, or promotion without further compensation, unless prohibited by law. Winners are responsible for paying any income taxes on the value of the prize received.

8. Future US is not responsible for any damages or expenses that winners might incur as a result of this contest or the receipt of any prize. In addition, contestants release and hold Future US and its employees harmless from any and all damages and claims of any kind in connection with the contest. Future US reserves the right to confirm all winners for eligibility and compliance with the rules and regulations.

9. This contest is open to residents of the United States only. Void in Vermont, Rhode Island, Puerto Rico, and where prohibited by law.

10. Employees, officers, and directors of Future US, the publisher or their subsidiaries and affiliated companies, and their immediate families and those living in their households, are not eligible.

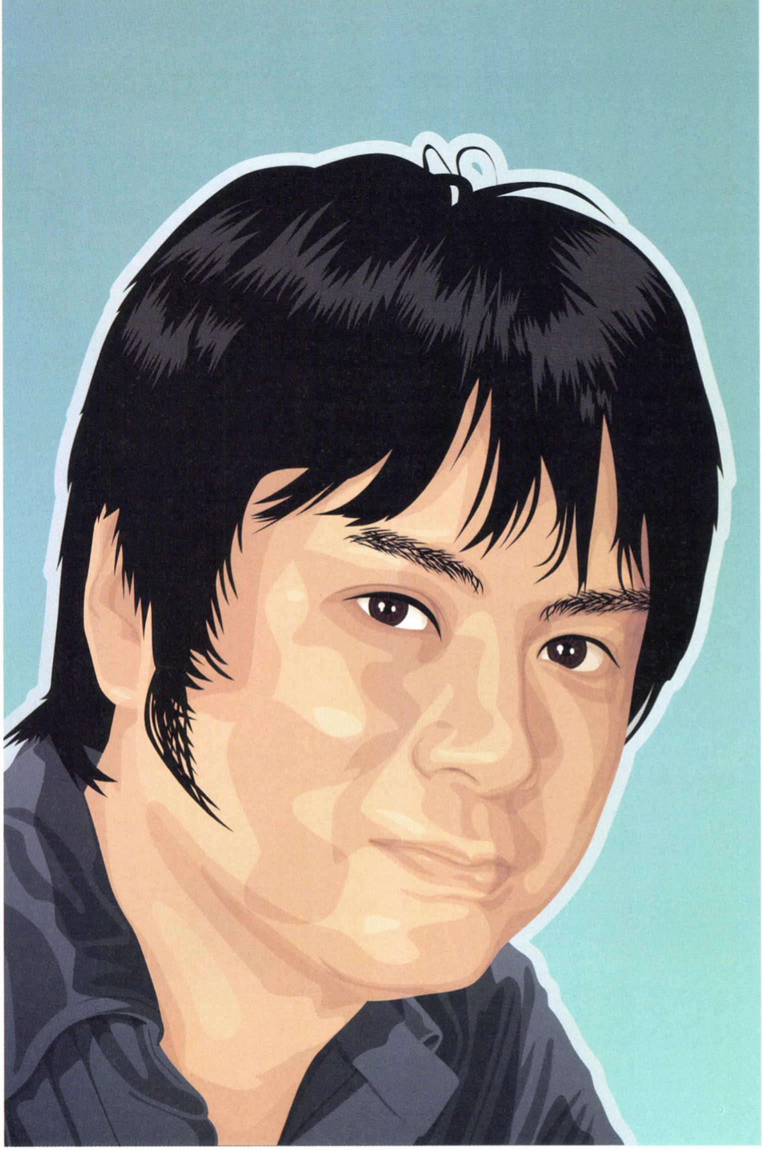
11. A contestant may enter by printing their name, address, daytime telephone number and e-mail address (if they have one) and the name of the prize drawing on a 3x5 card and mailing it to: Nintendo Power Sweepstakes V.230, c/o Future US, 1000 Marina Blvd., STE 510 Brisbane, CA 94005. Only one entry per person will be accepted.

EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Comic Mischief

Wii console sold separately.

15

Power Profiles



DATE OF BIRTH
December 12, 1967

BIRTHPLACE
Tokyo, Japan

POSITION
Music composer; Representative Director of Ancient Corp.

BEST KNOWN FOR
Creating some of the best music in video games, paving the streets of rage

FAVORITE FOOD
Curry

CURRENT PROJECTS
They're top-secret

Yuzo Koshiro

ILLUSTRATION BY CHRISTINA EMPEDOCLES

When players talk about the best game soundtracks of all time, the works of Yuzo Koshiro are consistently near the top of the list. Whether they feature funky techno beats or soothing orchestral melodies, Koshiro's tunes are always original, usually extremely memorable, and often highly successful; the Ys series, which Koshiro was heavily involved with, has spawned more Japanese music albums than almost any game franchise. Koshiro has created music on both sides of the 16-bit wars (he worked on greats such as ActRaiser on the Super NES and the Streets of Rage series for the Sega Genesis), and while he's best known for his compositions, he's also helped design several games on systems ranging from the Game Gear to the GameCube. After more than 20 years in the industry, Koshiro shows no signs of slowing down—he recently contributed music to Super Smash Bros. Brawl and composed the score for Etrian Odyssey II: Heroes of Lagaard—which is music to the ears of his many fans.

NINTENDO POWER: When did you become interested in music? How did that evolve into a career for you?

YUZO KOSHIRO I've always liked music, ever since I started playing the piano when I was three. After getting hooked on video game music, I started to think about making that into a profession. That happened right around the third year of high school when I was 17.

When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?

A scientist [laughs]. I had an interest in both the really small and really big—things like tiny microorganisms and large stars.

What instruments do you play, and which is your favorite?

Right now, I can play the piano and guitar. Up until 20 years ago, I also played the violin and cello, but I haven't practiced either at all, so I don't think I can play them anymore. My favorite instrument definitely has to be the piano.

How did you first become involved in the video game industry?

I'd have to say it all started when I was a writer for a gaming magazine called My Com Basic Magazine.

As far as we know, you got your start on Falcom's sound team, in an era before composers were individually credited. What titles did you work on for Falcom?

I worked on six games at Falcom Japan: Xanadu Scenario II, Ys, Ys II, Sorcerian, Romancia, and Dragon Slayer Family.

What game-music composition has been the most memorable experience for you and why?

Shenmue. Usually I close myself off in a room to make music, but for Shenmue we had a large room full of composers creating the music together. It was a highly memorable experience.

What's the process like creating game music? How much of the game do you get to see beforehand?

Work tends to begin with a proposal approximately 10 pages long and some art assets. Sometimes there's also some footage to look at. In the beginning, we don't have much to work with, but as the project progresses we can play test builds and create music from there.

How has your musical style changed since the 8- and 16-bit days?

I don't feel like it has changed much, but I definitely use more materials and samples.

And how has the video game industry changed during the time you've been involved with it?

The scale of the industry has definitely expanded, but I feel like we are seeing a lot more standardized games. It's unfortunate to see less of a spotlight on games that blaze a trail into newfound territory.

Can you tell us how your company, Ancient, became involved in game development, outside of doing audio? Do you contribute to the planning and design of games like Beyond Oasis and Amazing Island, or is that done by other employees within your company?

It all started with working on Game Gear's Sonic the Hedgehog at our company. Not only did I do the music for Beyond Oasis, Amazing Island, and Streets of Rage 2, but I also helped create the basic original plans. Development is, of course, centered around the staff of Ancient.

Many longtime gamers consider your work on ActRaiser, Revenge of Shinobi, Streets of Rage, etc., some of the best game music ever done. Why do you think your music still resonates after all these years?

I believe it's due to the fact that I composed those with a constant pressure urging me onward. On the other hand, compositions that I let my guard down on have not been as successful.

We've seen you work on a lot of remixes of favorite game tunes in recent years. What appeals to you about remixing popular game tunes, and how do you approach the remix process?

It makes me happy because many people will listen to something related to a popular song. For me, remixing begins with familiarizing yourself with the song, and attempting to emphasize its strongest qualities.

How did you become a part of Super Smash Bros. Brawl, and what was the experience like working on the game? Did you get to choose what songs you worked on?

I got an invitation from Mr. Sakurai to participate in helping out with the game, and I must say it was an incredibly exciting experience. The tracks to remix were chosen on a first-come, first-serve basis, and by the time I headed to Nintendo, half the songs were already chosen. I decided to take

GAMEOGRAPHY

Yuzo Koshiro's works span numerous consoles and game genres. You can check out several of his older hits on Wii's Virtual Console.

NoviceFighter
Hit Points
0000113
Gold
0000706
Food
0002228
Experience
0000210
0000960
Equipment
Hit-94
Killed+10exp
Enter-Shop
Sell or Buy ?
Thanks

**XANADU SCENARIO II:
THE RESURRECTION OF DRAGON**
1986, NEC PC-8801
COMPOSER

**YS: ANCIENT YS
VANISHED OMEN**
1987, NEC PC-8801
COMPOSER

THE REVENGE OF SHINOBI
1990, SEGA GENESIS
COMPOSER

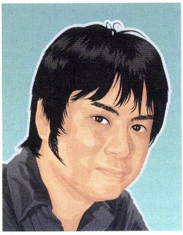
ACT PLAYER ENEMY ×02 TIME 244 SCORE 7700

ACTRAISER
1991, SUPER NES
COMPOSER

AXEL
Y.SIGNAL
PRESS 2UP START

STREETS OF RAGE 2
1992, SEGA GENESIS
COMPOSER

Power Profiles



Zelda's main theme and Metroid's Norfair theme simply because I'm a fan of both games. I was lucky that Zelda's theme was still up for grabs.

For years players have been hoping for a new Streets of Rage game. Do you want to see that happen, and do you think it ever will?
I'm also a huge fan of the Streets of Rage series and have a longing for it to be revived. However, I have no idea when that might happen.

What sort of music do you perform at your live events? Will you be touring again this year, and if so, will Etrian Odyssey tracks be added to your set?
I don't have any plans for live concerts at the moment, but I would like to play Etrian Odyssey music live.

We understand that the Etrian Odyssey soundtrack was composed with samples from an old PC-8801 soundboard. Do you find that creativity thrives within the strict restraints of older technology, as opposed to the infinite possibilities of CD audio?
I believe creativity is unaffected by new or old sound sources.

The music of Etrian Odyssey sounds like old-school game music, in the best possible way. Outside of using sound hardware and samples from the 8- and 16-bit era, how do you approach composition to give it a "classical video game" feel?
I arranged the melodies to fit the style I had in the early '90s, to help bring out the old-school atmosphere.

Now that sound hardware has evolved to the point where it can replicate instrumental compositions, do you feel that the older style of video game music is in danger of being lost? Is that an art form worth protecting?
I feel that it is neither something that needs to be forcefully preserved, nor is it something that should disappear. I believe the old style still has a chance to persevere on platforms such as the DS and mobile games.

When you compose synthesized-sounding music, as in Etrian Odyssey, do you have specific instruments in mind for each of the samples, or do you sometimes intentionally use samples that aren't evocative of real-world instruments?
For Etrian Odyssey, I already had set samples to use, but that is not always necessarily the case. And yes, I will intentionally use some specific samples at times.

How would you say the music in Etrian Odyssey has evolved in Etrian Odyssey II?
In increasing the number of instruments used, the music of the game is more fruitful in the second one.

Do you have a particular favorite song or soundtrack you've composed?
Out of my old compositions, I'd have to say the music from Streets of Rage 2. Recently, I have been happy with my pieces in Etrian Odyssey and the Midnight Maximum Tune series.

When you reach a roadblock while composing a tune, what's your process for working through it?
I play with my kids for a change of pace.

What games do you play for fun? Do you play music games?
I love FPS and fighting games. I rarely play music games.

What other games or game creators do you most admire or respect, and why?
There are many people that I respect and admire, but if I had to choose one, I'd have to say Shigeru Miyamoto. I've been a big fan of his since the Mario Bros. days.

What are some of your favorite non-gaming hobbies or pastimes?
I really like watching competitive sports on TV. I especially like watching baseball; I watch a lot of MLB games.

What kinds of music do you especially enjoy?
I don't think it's possible for me to write down all the musicians I like. I listen to all genres of music, but my number-one choice would have to be classical.

Whose works in other forms of media, such as film or literature, do you admire or enjoy?
None in particular.

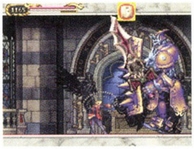
If you could have one superpower, what would it be and why?
I would like the ability to produce infinite energy. I think the world would finally be at peace.

> *"I believe the old style still has a chance to persevere on platforms such as the DS and mobile games."*

GAMEOGRAPHY

BEYOND OASIS
1994, SEGA GENESIS
COMPOSER, PRODUCER

SHENMUE
2000, DREAMCAST
COMPOSER



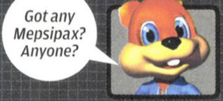
CASTLEVANIA: PORTRAIT OF RUIN
2006, DS
COMPOSER

SUPER SMASH BROS. BRAWL
2008, Wii
COMPOSER

Dealt 94 damage to M.Chris

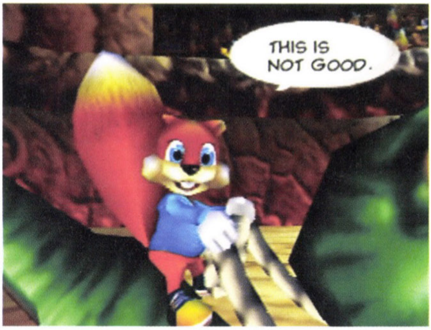
ETRIAN ODYSSEY II: HEROES OF LAGAARD
2008, DS
COMPOSER

The Best New Web Videos
Every Day
Garbage Free
Find Something Good
gloob.tv
fresh hand-picked web videos


Got any Mepsipax? Anyone?

CONKER'S BAD FUR DAY

Cute and cuddly meets rude and crude in Rare's brilliant M-rated platformer.



Conker's very familiar with the phrase, "no shoes, no shirt, no service." That's why he's missing only his pants.

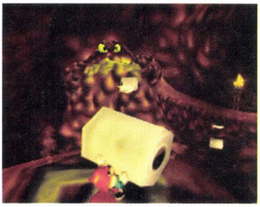
PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 64**
DEVELOPER: **RARE**
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
RELEASE DATE: **APRIL 2001**
COVERED IN ISSUES: **132, 134, 136**
AGE TO PLAY THE GAME: **17**

This article signifies a momentous occasion in Nintendo Power history: it's the first time that we've given any sizable coverage to Conker's Bad Fur Day. For Nintendo Power to gloss over any major release is pretty weird, but to ignore a Nintendo-published game from Rare, the developer behind Donkey Kong Country? That's obscene! Then again, so was the game itself—and we mean that in the best possible way.

Conker the squirrel has one of the most convoluted histories of any character in video games. The anthropomorphic furball first appeared as a playable character in Diddy Kong Racing on the Nintendo 64, then starred in a kid-friendly Game Boy Color adventure called Conker's Pocket Tales, and was slated to be a supercute 3-D platform star in an N64 game known as Conker's Quest (which was later renamed Twelve Tales: Conker 64). But a funny thing happened somewhere along the way: after years of delays, Twelve Tales underwent a complete transformation, and the squirrel remerged as a raunchy, lewd, foul-mouthed, excessively thirsty critter aimed squarely at adults.

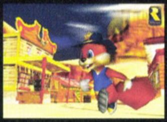
Between the swearing, the innuendos, the bizarre sense of humor, and the lack of arbitrary collectibles (gasp!), Conker's Bad Fur Day broke almost every rule established by other Rare-developed titles—but amazingly, the game was all the better for it. Though gameplay was based on solid platforming conventions like jumping, hovering, and, um, hitting enemies with a frying pan, it came across as extremely fresh thanks to the seemingly limitless game design. Context-sensitive actions let you do whatever was necessary for the task at hand (say, hurling a roll of toilet paper at an enemy), and the situations you encountered were nothing short of surreal. Before the adventure was over, you'd give cows extreme intestinal distress, relieve yourself in a prehistoric nightclub, fight an evil plush-bear army of Tediz, get transformed into a vampire bat to fend off angry villagers, and battle a giant, singing monster made of poo. Even popular movies were fair game; parodies of films such as *Star Wars*, *Saving Private Ryan*, and *The Matrix* led to some genuine laugh-out-loud moments.

Though Bad Fur Day received massive praise from critics and hardcore enthusiasts alike for its gameplay, humor, and presentation (it's one of the best-looking and -sounding games on the N64), the game was a commercial disappointment and Conker never showed his face on Nintendo systems again. Good-bye, socially troubled squirrel. There will probably never be another like you.
—CHRIS H.

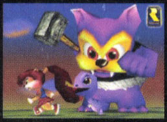


UNTOLD TALES

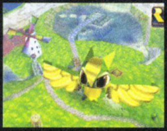
Before it received its infusion of M-rated humor, Conker's game—then known as Twelve Tales: Conker 64—was slated to be something completely different. Take a look at the Conker game you never played.



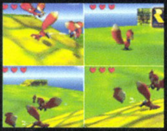
Levels in Twelve Tales included the Old West and ancient Rome. Note Conker's wacky hat.



Berri was originally going to be a playable character with puzzle-oriented gameplay. She sure got a makeover!



Shooter stages, in which you played as Conker's owl pal, were also on tap. At least the windmill made the final cut.



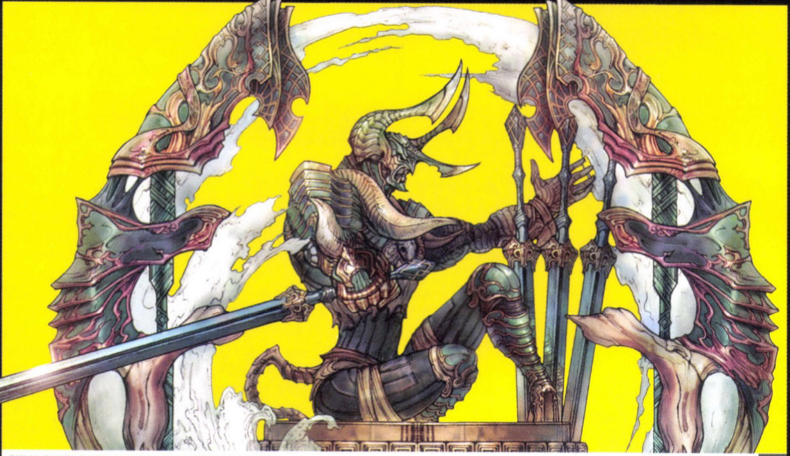
Twelve Tales' multiplayer options (including co-op) wouldn't have been as violent as BFD's versus mode.

HAVE A FAVORITE CLASSIC GAME YOU'D LIKE TO SEE REVISITED?
Send us your requests—we'll consider them for a future installment of Playback. **nintendopower@futureus.com**

REVIEWS

IN-DEPTH REVIEWS OF ALL THE LATEST GAMES

We take to the battlefield in Final Fantasy Tactics A2: Grimoire of the Rift, the latest in Square Enix's legendary strategy RPG series.



FINAL FANTASY TACTICS A2: GRIMOIRE OF THE RIFT 86

JACKPOT
5,000PTS
FEVER
CHAIN

SPACE INVADERS EXTREME 90

DEATH JR.: ROOT OF EVIL 88

14,370
Press to START

LEGO INDIANA JONES: THE ORIGINAL ADVENTURES (Wii) 87

01
TURN
2
Rachel
HP 164 TP 52
Lancer
HP 144 TP 46
Missy
HP 165 TP 101
Gina
HP 146 TP 72
Adrian
HP 113 TP 71

Adrian released the seal on the Eschaton formula!

ETRIAN ODYSSEY II: HEROES OF LAGAARD 88

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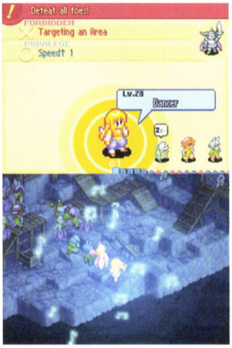
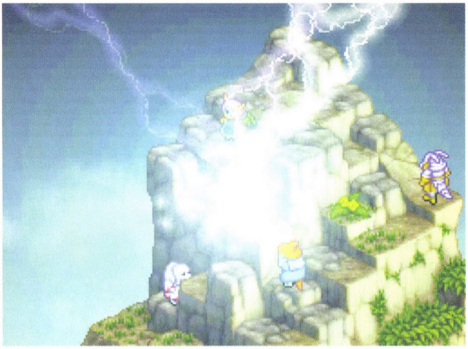
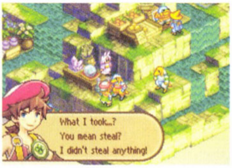
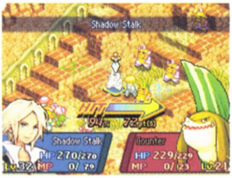






What I took...?
You mean steal?
I didn't steal anything!



Tactically Sound

FINAL FANTASY TACTICS A2: GRIMOIRE OF THE RIFT

RATING: 7.0

PLATFORM: **DS**
PUBLISHER: **SQUARE ENIX**
DEVELOPER: **SQUARE ENIX**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

I'm a big fan of strategy RPGs, and the original Final Fantasy Tactics is one of my all-time favorite games. The 1998 PlayStation classic combined deep, challenging gameplay with a compelling tale of political intrigue and a memorable cast of characters whose allegiances and motivations kept you guessing until the very end. In 2003, Square Enix delivered Final Fantasy Tactics Advance, a stand-alone follow-up for the Game Boy Advance (marking the publisher's return to Nintendo hardware after a six-year absence), and though it evolved the franchise's battle system in some interesting ways, the simple plot and considerably younger tone came as a disappointment. For better and for worse, Final Fantasy Tactics A2 follows in its predecessor's footsteps.

As in Tactics Advance, Grimoire of the Rift tells of a young boy who is mysteriously transported to the world of Ivalice. Upon arriving in this fantastical realm, our hero runs into trouble and is forced to join a clan, which serves as your party throughout the adventure. The game is once again built around quests that you learn about and purchase from local pubs. Though they occasionally require merely traveling to a certain location or delivering a particular item, the vast majority of quests involve some type of conflict. The turn-based battle system is robust as ever, and Grimoire boasts a number of enhancements, including new character races, new jobs, and a welcome overhaul of the laws system. Each engagement still begins with a judge informing you of that skirmish's special rule—don't use fire magic, for instance—but it's implemented more as a carrot than as a stick. You choose a clan bonus such as increased power or luck prior to battle, and that bonus endures for as long as you abide by the judge's rule. Moreover, should you remain lawful for the entirety of the fight, you'll be rewarded with additional items and equipment. If you break the law, you'll simply be unable to revive knocked-out characters with a Phoenix Down for the remainder of the battle. As a result, laws are far less annoying than they were in the previous game, which would send your clan members to prison and force you to bail them out.

The other big addition is a modified version of the bazaars found in Final Fantasy XII. Before you can purchase a given weapon or piece of equipment, you must construct it from certain combinations of loot earned in battle. And because characters can learn new abilities only by equipping the necessary weapons or armor, there's plenty of incentive to score extra loot by tackling optional quests. The way it's all intertwined definitely gives the game a strong addictive quality; you want to keep playing "one more quest" just so you can see which new weapons and abilities you'll unlock.

It's a good thing, too, because the slow-moving narrative and ho-hum characters don't provide much incentive to keep playing. As a matter of fact, my experience with Grimoire of the Rift felt a little backwards; rather than a means by which I progressed through the game, earning new abilities became my primary *reason* for doing so. Those who don't get the same kick out of continually modifying and upgrading a little group of soldiers might find it difficult to stick through to the end.

The move from GBA to DS comes with a host of benefits. The graphics are much more detailed, Hitoshi Sakimoto's music sounds great (if a bit repetitive), and the information displayed on the top screen helps to eliminate most of the clunky menu navigation from the previous game. But the pairing of complex gameplay systems with a story and tone aimed squarely at youngsters feels no less incongruous. As a result, though Grimoire of the Rift is another solid effort that's sure to scratch your tactical itch, the original Tactics remains the pinnacle of the series.

—STEVE T.

WRITERS' BLOCK

YOU CLOSE YOUR EYES AND FALL ASLEEP. WHAT GAMES DO YOU DREAM ABOUT?

Justin Cheng

Most people have dreams that they're *in* a game, but I recently had a dream that I was sitting on my couch, *playing* a game. Man, my dreams are boring.

Chris Hoffman

Once I dreamed there was a Mr. T fishing RPG for DS in which the goal was to catch 120 special zombie fish. A giant Chuck Norris statue was the final boss.

Casey Loe

I once woke up eager to buy a newly released Strider game. It took hours before I realized that the game didn't actually exist.

Chris Shepperd

Oh, man. I've had too many Splinter Cell-style, behind-enemy-lines dreams to count. Chalk it up to delusions of Sam-Fisher grandeur, I suppose.

George Sinfield

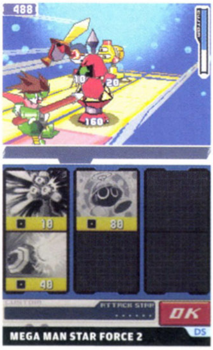
A daydream: after playing Spy Hunter, I've climbed into my own car and wondered, for a second, how to fire the machine guns.

Chris Slate

I can't remember if I've ever had a game dream, but I've lain awake in bed with Tetris and Super Mario Bros. burned into my eyelids after marathon play sessions.

Steve Thomason

After long play sessions with strategy RPGs, all of my dreams become grid-based. If only the real world could be so orderly.

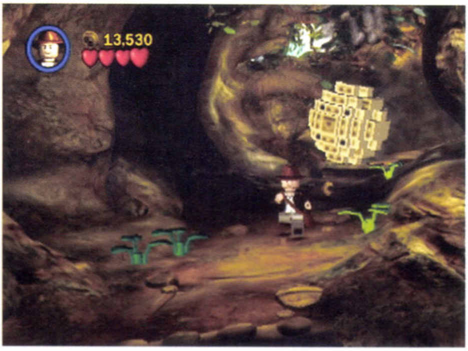


MEGA MAN STAR FORCE 2 DS

MEGA MAN STAR FORCE 2

RATING: 7.0
PLATFORM: DS
PUBLISHER: CAPCOM
DEVELOPER: CAPCOM
ESRB: EVERYONE

Mega Man Star Force 2 is set only two months after its predecessor, and boy does the game feel like it. As with other Mega Man games, Star Force 2 plays a lot like what's come before and offers only minor differences in its story and gameplay. Sure, your abilities are now tied to your friendship levels, the game is set during summer vacation, and you can explore almost the entire human world when you're in Mega Man form, but the general formula hasn't changed much. Luckily, that's not entirely a bad thing. The action-packed battles remain fun (even if the nifty lock-on and shield features aren't as fresh as they were last year), there are still a variety of interesting tasks and minigames to perform in each chapter, and the bosses are challenging as always. The random-encounter rate feels a bit high (there really should be more reward for fighting) and Mega Man's powered-up Wood Ninja, Elec Zerker, and Fire Saurian forms aren't quite as exciting as I'd hoped, but the core experience is enjoyable. The limited gameplay changes hardly justify a sequel so soon after the first Star Force, but series fans should have fun regardless. —CHRIS H.

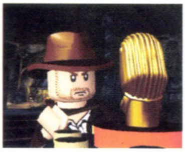


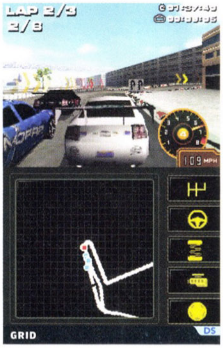
Whip It Good

LEGO INDIANA JONES: THE ORIGINAL ADVENTURES

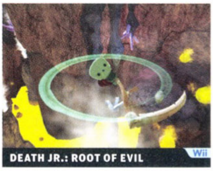
RATING: 7.5
PLATFORM: Wii
PUBLISHER: LUCASARTS
DEVELOPER: TRAVELLER'S TALES
ESRB: EVERYONE 10+

Just in time to catch the Indy-mania wave courtesy of summer's presumed blockbuster *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull* comes LEGO Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures on Wii. Like LEGO Star Wars: The Complete Saga, LEGO Indiana Jones combines accessible gameplay with compelling presentation to make a game for pretty much every fan of the film franchise. And it works: it's a lot of fun to explore the LEGO-ized Indiana Jones world, especially with a friend via the drop-in co-op mode. Sure, like LEGO Star Wars there's minimal challenge since you respawn almost exactly where you died and with little penalty (you lose a few studs, the currency to purchase new characters, hints, etc.), but it's meant to appeal to kids and adults alike. Besides, there are plenty of widgets to collect and secrets to uncover for hardcore gamers, and while you may be able to respawn, repeatedly falling into oblivion—partially due to the camera, which doesn't always provide the best angle—can test your patience. Also annoying is that when playing by yourself, your CPU-controlled partner sometimes refuses to stay in place when he's supposed to, making some puzzle-solving portions slightly more of a hassle. It's not a huge problem, however, since you're best off playing with a friend anyway. Ultimately, the main draw of LEGO Indiana Jones is playing through many of the movies' most memorable moments in the charming LEGO style, and the game definitely succeeds in doing that. —JUSTIN C.



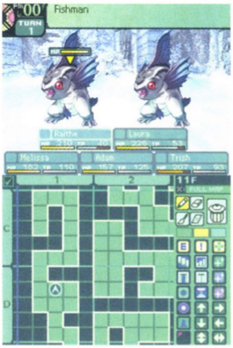


GRID DS

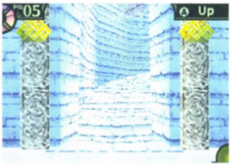


DEATH JR.: ROOT OF EVIL Wii

DEATH JR.: ROOT OF EVIL Wii



01
TURN 2
Adrian released the seal on the Eschaton formula!
Rachel
Lancer
Missy
Gina
Adrian



GRID

RATING: 8.5
PLATFORM: **DS**
PUBLISHER: **CODEMASTERS**
DEVELOPER: **FIREBRAND GAMES**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

Most racing games have been rather middle-of-the-road for the DS, to the point that the genre's fans may have begun to write off the system as a viable platform for them. GRID blows right by those notions with a game that continually surprises you with luxury design and sports-car performance.

For racing games, graphics aren't just aesthetic; they help deliver a sense of speed and provide depth to let you know when to brake and turn. GRID delivers on both fronts—it's easy to tell where you're going and how fast, and it looks nice. The game runs well from any camera angle, too, although it would be convenient if you could change the camera somewhere besides in the main options menu. The cars themselves aren't quite as high-quality as the courses, but they look authentic and you can go crazy with custom paint jobs.

Whether it's tracks that you designed or the ones included in the game, the overall course quality is outstanding. The included tracks, such as winding mountain passes and a looping parking garage, are distinct and fun to drive. Better still, they provide inspiration for building your own tracks, one of GRID's most touted features. The course creator deserves all the praise it gets—it's easy to use, but still detailed enough for you to make some really challenging tracks.

The set of robust game modes includes single-card multiplayer and Wi-Fi play. The single-player mode lacks a little polish—it'd be nice to know what rewards you could earn before entering a race, and the car-upgrade system is flimsy. Whether you're competing against CPU cars or your friends, though, GRID is one of the most challenging and entertaining racing games for DS yet. —CHRIS SH.

DEATH JR.: ROOT OF EVIL

RATING: 7.0
PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **EIDOS**
DEVELOPER: **BACKBONE**
ESRB: **TEEN**

The previously handheld-exclusive Death Jr. series has never really caught on, but I'm hoping gamers will give the Grim Reaper's little boy and his pals another look. Using the Wii remote to look around and shoot is a big improvement that addresses the PSP version's camera issues, and it's an overall better-looking game, to boot. However, Root of Evil's core gameplay, disappointingly, remains largely unchanged. It's not that the game isn't fun (it mostly is); it's just that the combat feels repetitive and the platforming can become a tad frustrating late in the adventure. Neither is so bad that you shouldn't play the game, though, and the split-screen co-op helps compensate for these flaws. —JUSTIN C.

Lovable Laggard

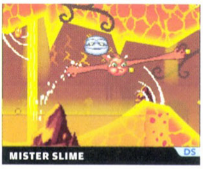
ETRIAN ODYSSEY II: HEROES OF LAGAARD

RATING: 8.5
PLATFORM: **DS**
PUBLISHER: **ATLUS**
DEVELOPER: **ATLUS**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

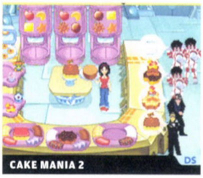
Every good game is entitled to one freebie sequel—a quick-turnaround follow-up that swaps in a new setting, fixes a few flaws, and dishes up one or two simple twists on the original formula. Like Viewtiful Joe 2, Pikmin 2, and countless other slacker sequels, Etrian Odyssey II: Heroes of Lagaard is a second helping instead of a bold reinvention. Luckily, the original Etrian Odyssey was an excellent game, and any of its fans should be happy to come back for seconds.

The most significant change is the three new character classes, all of which feel well-balanced and distinctly different from the nine returning classes. Another welcome addition is the Force system (replacing the lame Boost system), which allows characters to charge up class-specific special moves that actually have a significant impact. The checkpoint system has been modified for the better, and the significant number of interface refinements shows that the developers were willing to fix even the tiniest of flaws. Unfortunately, they've shied away from the big ones: there's still just a single linear dungeon, so you'll have to do your grinding in areas you're already thoroughly bored with, and the side quests remain tedious exercises in fetching, collecting, and monster-slaughtering.

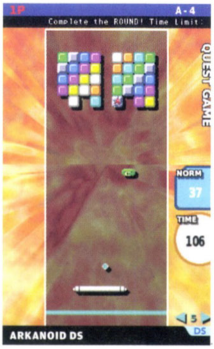
But Atlus hasn't messed up any of the things that made the original Etrian Odyssey great. The game still offers a level of challenge that is brutal but fair, cleverly designed floors that put the game's free map-drawing system to good use, a catchy Yuzo Koshiro soundtrack, and plenty of thrilling FOE-dodging scenarios that will leave your DS coated in palm sweat (or is that just me?). Etrian Odyssey 2 isn't very ambitious, but it's still plenty of fun. —CASEY L.



MISTER SLIME



CAKE MANIA 2



ARKANOID DS

MISTER SLIME

RATING: 6.0

PLATFORM: **DS**
PUBLISHER: **SOUTHPEAK GAMES**
DEVELOPER: **LEXIS NUMÉRIQUE**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

If the title of SouthPeak's lighthearted DS adventure brings to mind images of Square Enix's blue blob mascot, you're not far off. This slime, though, sports four elastic appendages for grabbing onto anchor points, a clever tap-and-climb play mechanic that is suited perfectly for the DS. The trouble comes when Slimy has to slingshot himself into enemies, causing damage to himself more often than not. An alternative to climbing comes early when you learn that you can make the hero float by blowing into the DS mic. The method speeds up navigation through the game's 40 levels, but tedium eventually sets in when you're left wandering aimlessly for want of a map. —GEORGE S.

ARKANOID DS

RATING: 6.5

PLATFORM: **DS**
PUBLISHER: **SQUARE ENIX**
DEVELOPER: **TAITO**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

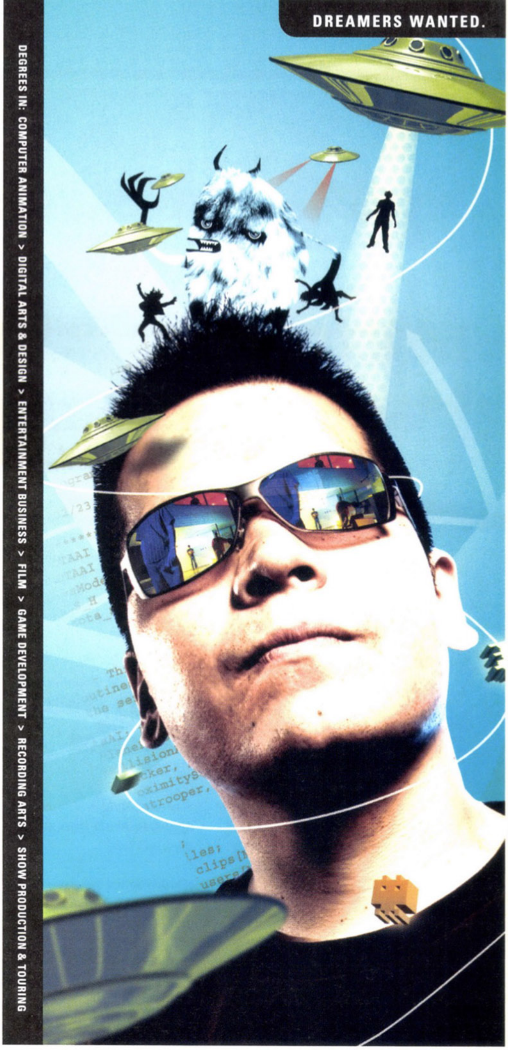
Though not as glossy as Space Invaders Extreme (another Taito update from Square Enix), brick-breaker Arkanoid DS takes advantage of the DS hardware more than its classic-reborn cousin by offering a vertical playing field and a touch-control option. The advantage to using your stylus is that you can move the Vaus paddle more quickly than you can using the Control Pad; the disadvantage is that your hand can get in the way of the action. A laser barrier that deflects your ball at the bottom of the screen (but eventually breaks) and a forgiving continue option make the stakes low and the tension minimal. —GEORGE S.

CAKE MANIA 2

RATING: 6.5

PLATFORM: **DS**
PUBLISHER: **MAJESCO**
DEVELOPER: **DIGITAL EMBRYO**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

Since Cake Mania 2 looks almost exactly the same as its predecessor, I was expecting it to play identically as well. Much to my surprise, however, the game has been subtly refined in many ways—the touch-screen controls are more reliable, and you can use the Control Pad to get a better view of your bakery. The actual gameplay—tapping customers and equipment to bake, frost, decorate, and sell cakes—hasn't changed at all, but at least there are more varieties of products to help hold your interest. Unfortunately, one criticism I had of the first Cake Mania still stands: there's not much depth, and it gets old pretty fast. Still, the gameplay is solid, especially for the casual crowd. —CHRIS H.



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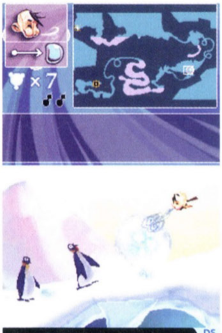
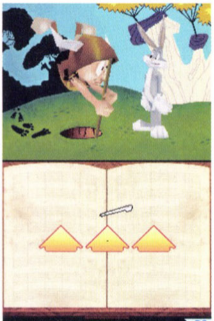
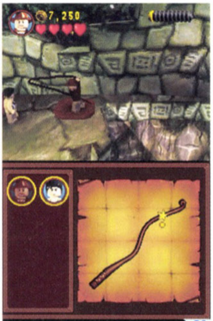


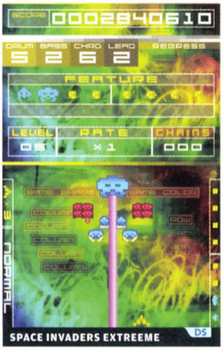
SOUL BUBBLES DS



LOONEY TUNES: CARTOON CONDUCTOR DS



LEGO INDIANA JONES: THE ORIGINAL ADVENTURES DS



SPACE INVADERS EXTREEME DS

SOUL BUBBLES

RATING: 6.5

PLATFORM: **DS**
PUBLISHER: **EIDOS**
DEVELOPER: **MEKENSLEEP**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

Soul Bubbles is precisely the kind of game that should be made for the DS: it's an innovative concept that takes strong advantage of the DS's abilities, and it keeps the player's time commitment to a minimum with short levels. But the game is far from perfect. The concept of navigating bubbles around dangerous obstacles via the touch screen has a lot of potential, but it feels like the game could have taken the idea a step further than it does. And Soul Bubbles introduces too many of its ideas up front instead of rolling them out progressively. There are advanced moves to learn later, but they feel isolated—you learn a move, play several levels with that move, then forget about it because it's unlikely to be used much later in the adventure. Thanfkully, the game opens up new areas rather frequently—it's best to jump around between levels to break the monotony of clearing them region by region. The art style is really fun and suits the playful nature of the game well by sticking to a simple palette. However, it's sometimes difficult to tell what is part of the level and what's in the background—you spend a lot of time bumping into walls trying to figure out where to go. Soul Bubbles could use a few new modes, as well, which takes us back to the idea of untapped potential. Timed missions and multiplayer races would've worked perfectly, but instead there's just the one main single-player mode and nothing else. Soul Bubbles is on the right track toward greatness, but we'll have to hope for a fully realized sequel before it gets there. —CHRIS SH.

LOONEY TUNES: CARTOON CONDUCTOR

RATING: 6.5

PLATFORM: **DS**
PUBLISHER: **EIDOS**
DEVELOPER: **AMAZE ENTERTAINMENT**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

It's fitting that the Warner Bros. cartoon catalog provides the backdrop for a music-oriented game. The company's shorts mined the classics successfully for the soundtrack to Bugs Bunny's antics, after all. In game terms, though, the result is a mixed bag that owes as much to Elite Beat Agents as it does to Bach, Wagner, and Beethoven. Cartoon Conductor uses an Elite Beat-esque (but more limited) interface for tapping and dragging to the music, and the display is confusing when a lot of beats are in play. Also, while the agents boogie to pop songs, Marvin the Martian and company sometimes slog through an assortment of tunes that may be classics but just aren't translatable to the rhythm-gaming format. The title hits a high note, however, with its treatment of the "Barber of Seville" overture: one of Bugs Bunny's best cartoons, possessing a good beat that you can tap to. —GEORGE S.

LEGO INDIANA JONES: THE ORIGINAL ADVENTURES

RATING: 7.5

PLATFORM: **DS**
PUBLISHER: **LUCASARTS**
DEVELOPER: **TRAVELLER'S TALES**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

What's interesting and somewhat surprising about LEGO Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures on DS is that it's a slightly better game than the Wii version. Granted, it has the same basic, easy-to-pick-up-and-play gameplay, but it also has some neat DS-exclusive features (touch-screen minigames, for example) that make it stand out. More than that, the levels have been redesigned to work better on the handheld hardware, which actually makes the game more fun overall (the redesigned platforming sections in particular are more enjoyable than on Wii, though the platforming can still be problematic). Yes, we could complain that the multiplayer is a little more difficult to set up since another player can't just drop in and start playing (you have to set up a wireless game), but that would be nitpicky. —JUSTIN C.

SPACE INVADERS EXTREME

RATING: 8.0

PLATFORM: **DS**
PUBLISHER: **SQUARE ENIX**
DEVELOPER: **TAITO**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

Loaded with bells and whistles to the point of distraction, Square Enix's Space Invaders update hits you with slick animated backgrounds, a barrage of bonus rounds, and dazzlingly powerful weapon upgrades. The genius of the game is that it lets casual fans have a satisfying experience by mindlessly mowing down enemies in a cloud of colorful graphics, but at the same time it treats more-intense players with the challenge of completing chains and combos within a complex scoring system. The easy-to-learn basics that made the game a hit 30 years ago are still there—just wrapped up in a glitzier and deeper game. —GEORGE S.

ALSO THIS MONTH

Based on the CG flick, Wii and DS versions of **Kung Fu Panda** are coming from Activision.... Also on the licensed front, The Game Company's DS RPG sequel **Code Lyoko: Fall of Xana** has arrived.... Namco Bandai's **Tamagotchi Connection: Corner Shop 3** brings a bunch of new minigames to DS.... And on Wii, **Emergency Heroes** from Ubisoft lets the younger set control police, fire, and EMT vehicles.

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BLOCKBUSTER GAMING

Steven Spielberg has the golden touch. His past films are some of our all-time favorites, his next movie, *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*, is one of our most anticipated flicks of the year, and his and Electronic Arts' game Boom Blox (8.0) on Wii quite simply rocked our socks off last issue. Just as we were about to put our socks back on, Majesco's Blast Works: Build, Trade, Destroy (8.5) came out of nowhere and rocked us some more. It may not be a Spielberg game, but that doesn't make it any less awesome.

SCORES REFLECT INDIVIDUAL REVIEWERS' OPINIONS.
• INDICATES WI-FI COMPATIBLE

Wii				
TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Alien Syndrome	6.0	Sega	220	T
Alvin and the Chipmunks	N/A	Brash	224	E
Baroque	3.0	Atlus	227	T
• Battalion Wars 2	7.5	Nintendo	222	T
Ben 10: Protector of Earth	N/A	D3PA	223	E10+
The Bigs	6.0	2K Sports	218	E
Blast Works: Build, Trade, Destroy	8.5	Majesco	229	E
Bleach: Shattered Blade	N/A	Sega	222	T
Bomberman Land	5.0	Hudson	226	E
Boogie	5.5	Electronic Arts	220	E10+
Boom Blox	8.0	Electronic Arts	229	E
Brunswick Pro Bowling	6.0	Crave	219	E
Bully: Scholarship Edition	8.5	Rockstar	227	T
Carnival Games	7.0	Global Star	220	E
The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian	N/A	Disney Interactive	229	T
Code Lyoko: Quest for Infinity	N/A	The Game Factory	223	E10+
Cranium Kabookii	N/A	Ubisoft	224	E
Crash of the Titans	6.5	Sierra	221	E10+
Cruis'n	N/A	Midway	224	E
CSI: Hard Evidence	N/A	Ubisoft	225	M
Dance Dance Revolution: Hottest Party	8.0	Konami	221	E10+
Dave Mirra BMX Challenge	4.0	Crave	220	E
Deca Sports	N/A	Hudson	229	E
Destroy All Humans! Big Willy Unleashed	7.0	THQ	227	T
• Dewy's Adventure	7.0	Konami	221	E
Donkey Kong: Barrel Blast	6.5	Nintendo	221	E
Dragon Ball Z: Budokai Tenkaichi 3	N/A	Atari	223	T
Dragon Quest Swords: The Masked Queen and the Tower of Mirrors	7.0	Square Enix	226	T
Driver: Parallel Lines	5.0	Ubisoft	219	M
• Endless Ocean	7.5	Nintendo	225	E
• FIFA 08	N/A	Electronic Arts	222	E
Fire Emblem: Radiant Dawn	9.5	Nintendo	222	E10+
Furu Furu Park	N/A	Majesco	225	T
Game Party	N/A	Midway	224	E
• Geometry Wars: Galaxies	8.0	Sierra	222	E
• Ghost Squad	7.0	Sega	223	T
Godzilla Unleashed	5.5	Atari	223	E10+
The Golden Compass	4.0	Sega	224	E10+
Guilty Gear XX Accent Core	8.0	Aksys Games	222	T
• Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock	9.0	Activision	222	T
Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix	7.0	Electronic Arts	218	E10+
Harvey Birdman: Attorney at Law	6.5	Capcom	224	T
High School Musical: Sing It!	N/A	Disney Interactive	223	E
The House of the Dead 2 & 3 Return	7.0	Sega	227	M
Indoor Sports	N/A	Konami	223	E
Indy 500 Legends	N/A	Destineer	223	E
Iron Man	5.5	Sega	229	T
Jenga	N/A	Atari	223	E
Jumper	N/A	Brash	226	T
Karaoke Revolution Presents American Idol Encore	N/A	Konami	226	E
Kawasaki Quad Bikes	N/A	Destineer	223	E
Kidz Sports: Basketball	N/A	Destineer	224	E
Kidz Sports: Ice Hockey	N/A	Destineer	225	E
Legend of the Dragon	5.5	The Game Factory	218	T
LEGO Star Wars: The Complete Saga	N/A	LucasArts	222	E
Link's Crossbow Training	6.5	Nintendo	223	T
Looney Tunes: Acme Arsenal	3.5	WB Games	221	E10+
• Madden NFL 08	8.0	Electronic Arts	220	E
Manhunt 2	7.5	Rockstar Games	223	M
• Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games	7.5	Sega	223	E
• Mario Strikers Charged	8.5	Nintendo	219	E10+
• Medal of Honor Heroes 2	8.0	Electronic Arts	223	T
Mercury Meltdown Revolution	6.0	Ignition	221	E
Metroid Prime 3: Corruption	10	Nintendo	220	T
MiniCopter: Adventure Flight	N/A	Aksys	227	E
MLB 2K8	6.5	2K Sports	227	E
MLB Power Pros	6.5	2K Sports	222	E
• MX vs. ATV Untamed	6.0	THQ	224	E
My Horse and Me	N/A	Atari	225	E
My Word Coach	N/A	Ubisoft	223	E
MySims	7.0	Electronic Arts	221	E
Namco Museum Remix	N/A	Namco Bandai	222	E
Naruto: Clash of Ninja Revolution	7.0	Tomy/D3PA	222	T
Need For Speed ProStreet	8.0	Electronic Arts	223	E10+
Nicktoons: Attack of the Toybots	N/A	THQ	223	E
• NiGHTS: Journey of Dreams	9.0	Sega	224	E
Ninja Reflex	N/A	Electronic Arts	227	E10+
• Nitro Bike	3.5	Ubisoft	225	E10+
No More Heroes	8.0	Ubisoft	226	M
Obscure: The Aftermath	7.0	Ignition	227	M
Octomania	N/A	Conspiracy	227	E
One Piece: Unlimited Adventure	6.5	Namco Bandai	225	T
Opoona	7.0	Koei	227	E10+
Pinball Hall of Fame: The Williams Collection	7.5	Crave	227	E10+
• Pokémon Battle Revolution	6.5	Nintendo	218	E
• Pro Evolution Soccer 2008	N/A	Konami	227	E
Puzzle Quest: Challenge of the Warlords	N/A	D3PA	224	E10+
Ratatouille	7.5	THQ	218	E
• Rayman Raving Rabbids 2	6.5	Ubisoft	223	E10+
Resident Evil: The Umbrella Chronicles	8.0	Capcom	223	M
Resident Evil 4: Wii Edition	9.0	Capcom	218	M
Rockstar Games Presents Table Tennis	N/A	Rockstar	222	E
Samurai Warriors: Katana	7.5	Koei	224	T
Scarface: The World Is Yours	7.5	Sierra	218	M
Sega Bass Fishing	5.0	Sega	227	E
Sega Superstars Tennis	8.0	Sega	227	E10+
Showtime Championship Boxing	N/A	Jack of All Games	224	E10+
The Simpsons Game	4.0	Electronic Arts	223	T
Smarty Pants	N/A	Electronic Arts	223	E
• Sonic Riders: Zero Gravity	7.0	Sega	225	E
Soulcalibur Legends	6.5	Namco Bandai	223	T
Speed Racer	N/A	Warner Bros. Interactive	229	E
Summer Sports: Paradise Island	N/A	Destineer	227	E
Super Mario Galaxy	9.5	Nintendo	223	E
• Super Smash Bros. Brawl	10	Nintendo	226	T
Super Swing Golf Season 2	6.5	Tecmo	224	E10+
Target: Terror	N/A	Konami	227	M
Thrillville: Off the Rails	N/A	LucasArts	222	E
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08	8.0	Electronic Arts	221	E
Tomb Raider Anniversary	6.5	Eidos	223	T
Top Spin 3	7.0	2K Sports	229	E
Transformers: The Game	5.5	Activision	219	T
Trauma Center: New Blood	8.0	Atlus	223	T
Victorious Boxers: Revolution	N/A	XSEED	222	T
We Ski	6.0	Namco Bandai	229	E
Worms: A Space Oddity	6.0	THQ	227	E10+

REVIEWER NOTES

APOLLO JUSTICE: ACE ATTORNEY

I recently started playing through Apollo Justice: Ace Attorney again, and even though the twist-filled cases are now familiar territory, I never tire of the memorable characters, interesting scenarios, or clever writing (or yelling "Objection!" into the DS's microphone). There are too many plot holes to make the game as satisfying as the Phoenix Wright titles, but Apollo Justice is a blast anyway. Also, I think I'm developing a crush on Ema Skye.
—CHRIS H.

WE SKI

> *While not the deepest game, We Ski is definitely charming, and can be pretty relaxing when you're skiing around for the fun of it. The Balance Board support is a nice touch, too.*
>
> —JUSTIN C.

THE WORLD ENDS WITH YOU

Weird, experimental, stylish, and charming, The World Ends with You is my early pick for DS game of the year. I realize we're only halfway through 2008, but I have a tough time imagining any title enthralling me like this one. If anything, my score of 9.0 may have been too low. Hopefully the game will garner a large enough audience to prompt a follow-up from Square Enix some day. —STEVE T.

WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2008	6.5	THQ	222	T
WWII Aces	3.0	Destineer	226	T
Zack & Wiki: Quest for Barbaros' Treasure	9.0	Capcom	222	E
NINTENDO DS				
• Advance Wars: Days of Ruin	8.5	Nintendo	225	E10+
Alvin and the Chipmunks	N/A	Brash	223	E
American Girl: Julie Finds a Way	N/A	THQ	224	E
Apollo Justice: Ace Attorney	8.0	Capcom	226	T
Are you Smarter Than a 5th Grader?	N/A	THQ	223	E
Assassin's Creed: Altair's Chronicles	7.5	Ubisoft	226	T
Balls of Fury	N/A	Destination Software	222	E10+
• Bleach: The Blade of Fate	8.5	Sega	222	T
• Bomberman Land Touch! 2	6.0	Hudson	225	E
Boogie	7.0	Electronic Arts	224	E10+
Brain Challenge	N/A	Ubisoft	225	E
Bratz: Super Babyz	N/A	THQ	226	E
Brothers In Arms DS	9.0	Ubisoft	218	T
Build-A-Bear Workshop	N/A	The Game Factory	223	E
Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare	N/A	Activision	223	T
Chibi-Robo: Park Patrol	8.5	Nintendo	221	E
The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian	N/A	Disney Interactive	229	E10+
Code Lyoko	7.0	The Game Factory	218	E10+
Commando: Steel Disaster	N/A	XS Games	229	E10+
Contra 4	8.5	Konami	222	T
Corvette Evolution GT	N/A	Jack of All Games	223	E
Cooking Mama 2: Dinner with Friends	7.0	Majesco	223	E
Dementium: The Ward	8.5	Gamecock	223	M
DK Jungle Climber	8.0	Nintendo	221	E
Draglade	7.5	Atlus	224	E10+
Dragon Quest Monsters: Joker	8.0	Square Enix	222	E10+
Drawn to Life	7.5	THQ	221	E
Drone Tactics	7.0	Atlus	229	E10+
Dungeon Explorer: Warriors of Ancient Arts	6.5	Hudson	226	T
Dynasty Warriors DS: Fighter's Battle	7.5	Koei	219	E10+
Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer	2.0	2K Games	218	E10+
FIFA 08	8.0	Electronic Arts	221	E
• Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Ring of Fates	7.0	Square Enix	226	E10+
Final Fantasy XII: Revenant Wings	7.5	Square Enix	223	E10+
Flipper Critters	4.5	Ignition Entertainment	218	E
Front Mission	6.5	Square Enix	222	E10+
Fullmetal Alchemist Trading Card Game	7.0	Destineer	219	T
Garfield Gets Real	N/A	Destination	223	E
Garfield's Nightmare	7.0	The Game Factory	220	E
• Geometry Wars: Galaxies	N/A	Sierra	222	E
Glory Days 2: Brotherhood of Men	6.0	Eidos	218	E10+
Godzilla Unleashed: Double Smash	3.0	Atari	224	E
The Golden Compass	N/A	Sega	223	E10+
Hannah Montana: Music Jam	N/A	Disney Interactive	223	E
Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix	7.0	Electronic Arts	218	E10+
Harvest Moon DS Cute	7.5	Natsume	226	E
• Heroes of Mana	6.5	Square Enix	219	E10+
Homie Rollerz	N/A	Destineer	226	E
Hoshigami Remix	6.0	Aksys Games	218	E
Impossible Mission	N/A	Codemasters	223	E
Indy 500 Legends	N/A	Destineer	224	E
Insecticide	6.5	Gamecock	226	E10+
Iron Man	5.0	Sega	229	E10+
Jackass: The Game	N/A	Red Mile Entertainment	225	T
Jake Hunter: Detective Chronicles	5.0	Aksys	229	T
Left Brain, Right Brain	N/A	Majesco	224	E
• The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass	9.5	Nintendo	221	E
LEGO Star Wars: The Complete Saga	N/A	LucasArts	222	E
LifeSigns: Surgical Unit	N/A	Dreamcatcher	223	T
Looney Tunes: Duck Amuck	3.5	WB Games	221	E
Lost in Blue 3	5.5	Konami	227	E10+
• Luminous Arc	8.0	Atlus	219	T
Madden NFL 08	7.5	Electronic Arts	220	E
• Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games	7.5	Sega	225	E
Mario Party DS	8.0	Nintendo	223	E
Master of Illusion	N/A	Nintendo	223	E
• Mega Man Star Force	7.5	Capcom	220	E
Mega Man ZX Advent	8.5	Capcom	222	E10+
Miami Nights: Singles in the City	N/A	Ubisoft	225	T
Monster Jam	N/A	Activision	223	E
MX vs. ATV Untamed	6.0	THQ	224	E
My Horse and Me	N/A	Atari	225	E
MySims	N/A	Electronic Arts	222	E
Myst	5.0	Empire Interactive	227	E
Mystery Dungeon: Shiren the Wanderer	6.5	Sega	226	E
Namco Museum DS	8.0	Namco Bandai	221	E
• Nanostray 2	6.0	Majesco	225	E
Naruto: Ninja Destiny	7.0	Tomy/D3PA	226	T
Naruto: Path of the Ninja	7.0	Tomy/D3PA	222	E10+
• Need For Speed ProStreet	N/A	Electronic Arts	223	E
Nervous Brickdown	7.0	Eidos	219	E
Ninja Gaiden: Dragon Sword	8.5	Tecmo	227	T
Ninja Reflex	N/A	Electronic Arts	227	E10+
Ontamarama	7.0	Atlus	223	E
Operation: Vietnam	8.0	Majesco	220	T
Orcs & Elves	5.0	Electronic Arts	223	T
Panzer Tactics DS	N/A	Conspiracy	223	E10+
Pet Alien	8.0	The Game Factory	219	E
Petz: Bunnyz	N/A	Ubisoft	227	E
Petz Wild Animals: Tigerz	N/A	Ubisoft	227	E
Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney Trials and Tribulations	8.5	Capcom	222	T
• Picross DS	8.0	Nintendo	219	E
• Planet Puzzle League	8.5	Nintendo	217	E
• Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Explorers of Darkness	7.5	Nintendo	229	E
• Pokémon Mystery Dungeon: Exlporers of Time	7.5	Nintendo	229	E
Prism: Light the Way	8.5	Eidos	219	E
• Pro Evolution Soccer 2008	N/A	Konami	227	E
Professional Fisherman's Tour: Northern Hemisphere	5.0	UFO Interactive	219	E
• Professor Layton and the Curious Village	8.5	Nintendo	225	E
Puppy Palace	N/A	Ubisoft	225	E
Puzzle de Harvest Moon	N/A	Natsume	223	E
• Race Driver: Create & Race	7.5	Codemasters	219	T
Rayman Raving Rabbids 2	N/A	Ubisoft	223	E10+
• River King: Mystic Valley	7.0	Natsume	225	E
• Rune Factory: A Fantasy Harvest Moon	7.0	Natsume	219	E
Sega Superstars Tennis	8.0	Sega	227	E
SimCity DS	8.0	Electronic Arts	218	E
The Simpsons Game	N/A	Electronic Arts	223	T
Sonic Rush Adventure	9.0	Sega	221	E
Speed Racer	N/A	Warner Bros. Interactive	229	E
Strawberry Shortcake: 4 Seasons Cake	N/A	Jack of All Games	224	E
Summon Night: Twin Age	7.5	Atlus	229	E10+
Super Dodgeball Brawlers	6.5	Aksys	229	E
Thrillville: Off the Rails	N/A	LucasArts	222	E
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 08	8.5	Electronic Arts	221	E
Top Spin 3	6.0	2K Sports	229	E
Touch Detective 2 ½	6.5	Atlus	221	E
• TouchMaster	8.0	Midway	219	E
• Transformers: Autobots	6.0	Activision	219	E10+
• Transformers: Decepticons	6.0	Activision	219	E10+
Ultimate Mortal Kombat	N/A	Midway	223	M
• Warhammer 40,000: Squad Command	8.0	THQ	224	T
The Wild West	3.5	Majesco	220	E10+
Wordjong	N/A	Destineer	224	E
Worms: Open Warfare 2	7.5	THQ	221	E10+
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2008	N/A	THQ	222	T
• Yu-Gi-Oh! World Championship Tournament 2008	N/A	Konami	224	E
Zoo Tycoon 2 DS	7.0	THQ	226	E

MARIO KART Wii

I wasn't able to try the game out online for my review, but now I'm playing it over Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection every night and it's a blast. I've experienced a few dropped races, but by and large I'm quickly matched up with a full field of competitors and the action moves along without a hitch. This has quickly become my new favorite game to play over WFC—I can hardly put it down! —CHRIS SL.

BATTLE OF THE BANDS

The country version of Cypress Hill's "Insane in the Brain" is still stuck in my head thanks to this game, but that's not a bad thing at all. Some of the other covers aren't nearly as good, but I didn't really mind when I was playing multiplayer.

—JUSTIN C.

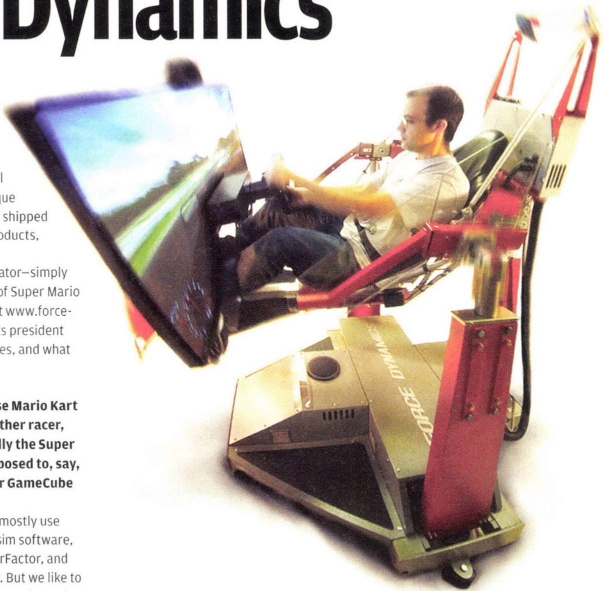
TARGET: TERROR

I'd probably be more appalled by Target: Terror if I didn't think that the developers were making it bad on purpose. The game is pure cheese—poorly acted '90s-style digitized characters imposed on simplistic 3-D backgrounds in bloody, nonstop gunfights that boast frequent framerate drops. This title is definitely not for anyone looking for sophisticated gaming, and the $40 asking price is way too steep for such a mindless mess. —CHRIS H.

FANDOM

Now You're Playing with Pow...er...Dynamics

We talk one-on-one with the man who brings Mario Kart one step closer to reality.



Chances are, you've never heard of Force Dynamics, a small family-run business in upstate New York. As a special boutique maker of sophisticated motion simulators, the company has shipped its machines to clients around the world to help promote products, train drivers, or simply draw a crowd.

Just for fun, the group recently rigged their motion simulator—simply called the 301—to work with the original Super NES version of Super Mario Kart (check out a video of the machine and game in action at www.force-dynamics.com). We had a chance to talk with Force Dynamics president David Wiernicki recently about his company, his love of games, and what it'll take to get your very own 301 setup. —KAISER H.

NINTENDO POWER Can you give us a quick overview of what your company does, and how it got started?

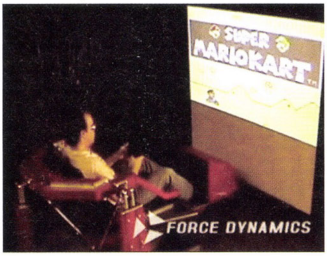
DAVID WIERNICKI Sure. In short, we build small, high-performance motion simulators. Most of our business is in event marketing—people who run trade shows or events for other companies buy them and use them to attract crowds. We also sell machines to high-end arcades, some to individuals, and some for training and "serious" simulation.

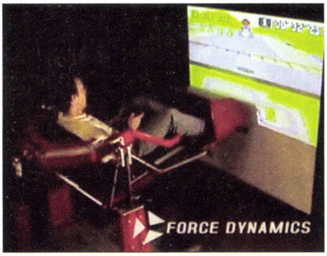
Why did you choose Mario Kart as opposed to another racer, and why specifically the Super NES version as opposed to, say, the Nintendo 64 or GameCube version?

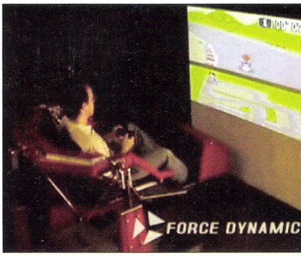
Our main products mostly use "hardcore" racing-sim software, like Live for Speed, rFactor, and Richard Burns Rally. But we like to have fun, too, and sometimes do some arcade stuff just for grins. I might be dating myself here, but to be honest I picked SNES Mario Kart because that's what I've played!

Do you consider yourself a gamer and/or a Nintendo fan in general?

I'm definitely a gamer, despite the lousy driving in the video (I had about an hour with the machine running Mario Kart, at about 2am, and the video is from the first take). Lately I don't have nearly as much







time as I'd like to for gaming, though; owning a business will do that!

Mostly I consider myself a PC-game person rather than a console person, because I've always had a computer. But my favorite game of all time was on the Super NES: Chrono Trigger.

When I was a kid, I desperately wanted a Nintendo (and I'm talking original NES here, not GameCube!) but didn't get one until later. Interestingly, that meant that I've always been horrible at platformers. And that pushed me toward driving simulations, and starting Force Dynamics—where I made my hardware work with a Nintendo [console].

I do remember seeing my buddies in middle school gathered around their Nintendo Power magazines, looking at the long stripes of game screenshots (actual film photos of televisions!) and wishing I could be "in there" in the game. So it's pretty cool to both be "in" the game, and have an interview in Nintendo Power!

How difficult is it to adapt a particular game to the 301 system? How long did the Mario Kart setup take?
It depends on the game. We like to have developers build support in themselves, if possible. If not, there are crazy tricks you can do in hardware and software to make things work. It took us a few hours over a couple of days to get Mario Kart working, but the work was based largely on other stuff we've done, so that made it easier. And the result definitely wasn't ready for anything but a demo video, which also made it easier.

You never see me finishing a race in the video, because as soon as I'd cross the line, the machine would swing wildly up in the air and go full tilt to the left. I blame that little guy on the cloud.

Do you have any other Nintendo-related projects we can look forward to in the future?
Aside from convincing my wife to let me get a Wii so I can play Boom Blox, nothing specific. It's very difficult to work with modern consoles, because the hardware is so complicated and you have to work with software developers directly. So we can't really go at it on our own, or just call up developers like we can with a lot of PC stuff.

If Nintendo gives us a call, though, we'll be happy to work with them. Being able to support motion on the Wii would be pretty amazing—imagine using a motion-based controller on a motion platform!

What would it cost for us to have our own 301 with Mario Kart?
Unfortunately, we can't sell any systems to use with Mario Kart, at least not without permission from Nintendo. The Mario Kart video was intended as a way to show off what our hardware can do, along with just being a lot of fun. But if you wanted one of our standard driving simulators (which also have a projector, wheel, etc.), it'd run you a little under $40,000 in the United States.

FORCE DYNAMICS

It's too bad that we'll never get to try playing Super Mario Kart with Force Dynamics' 301—it looks like it would be a lot of fun. Still, you can always imagine what it would be like by watching the video again.

FANDOM

Checkmate!

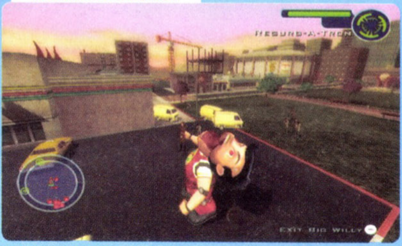
You might think that there'd be no interest in old-fashioned board games like chess, but reader Alyssa B. and her friends Amelia and Ethan beg to differ. Tasked with making a themed chess set in their art class, the three classmates each decided to make Nintendo chess sets. Alyssa's is composed of boss monsters from various Zelda games, including Ganon as the king. Ethan also made some Zelda pieces, including the Deku Tree and Navi, while Amelia decided to use Mario characters such as Toad, Boo, and Yoshi for her set. If all three of them keep up the good work, even *we* might have to put down the controllers for a while. —TOM H.

WRITE YOUR OWN CAPTION

Screen Test

Apparently, Volume 228's screen made many of you think of Link. (We can only assume that it's because of the hat and not the underpants.) After we sorted through your emails, we started to get hungry, which might explain our caption for this month's shot. If you're hungry as well, send a caption to screentest@futureus.com.

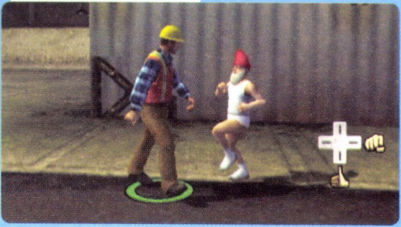
THIS MONTH'S SHOT



People—it's what's for dinner.

HERE'S OUR CAPTION.
Think you can do better?

VOLUME 228'S SHOT



"I wonder if this is what they meant when they said to report anything unusual." —STEPHEN L.

"The Legend of Zelda: Gnome in Underpants was an instant failure due to the fact that Link has a beard, a red cap, and is running amuck in his underpants." —ANONYMOUS

"Excuse me, do you know where the Johnson's front yard is? I'm late for work." —CHRISTOPHER F.

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Zelda – Second Quest
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NEXT MONTH

20th ANNIVERSARY
NINTENDO POWER
1988 – 2008

Join us as we celebrate 20 years of Nintendo Power and Nintendo gaming in our special anniversary extravaganza! We've got loads of great games lined up, plus a few surprises. This is the issue you can't miss!

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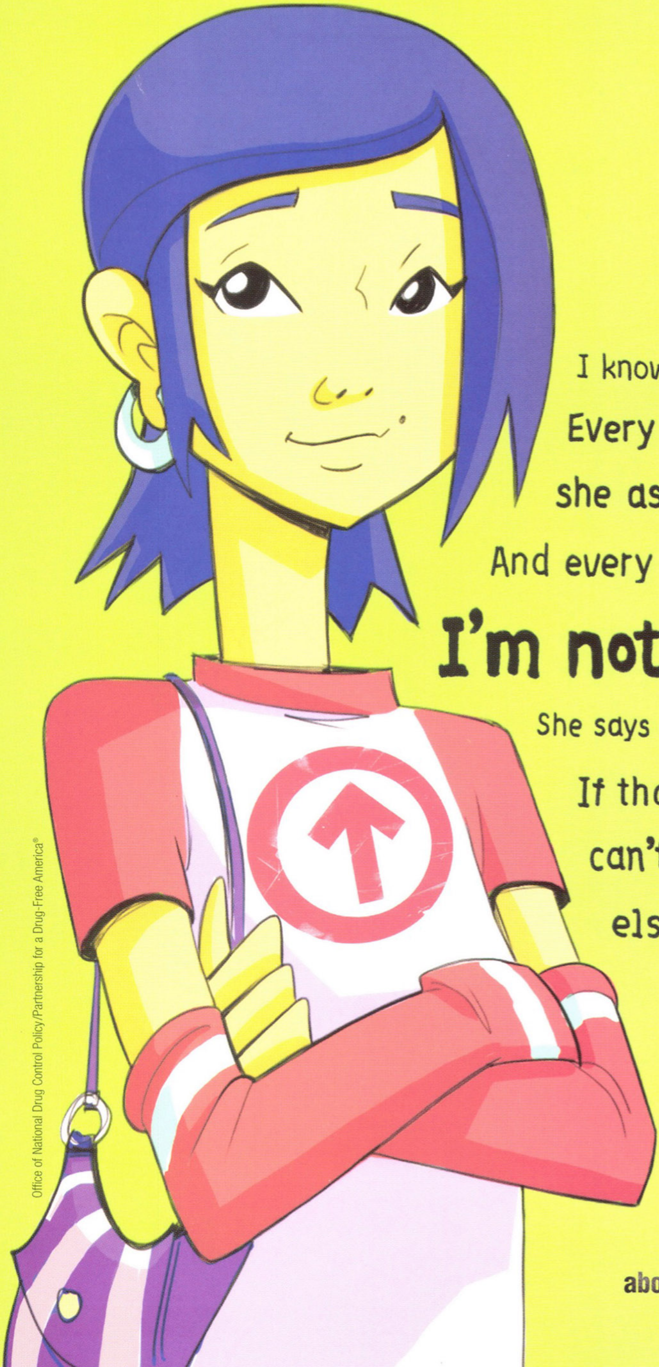

I know this girl on my block.
Every time I see her
she asks me to get high.
And every time I tell her that

I'm not into that.

She says all the kids are doing it.
If that's true, then why
can't she find someone
else to do it with?

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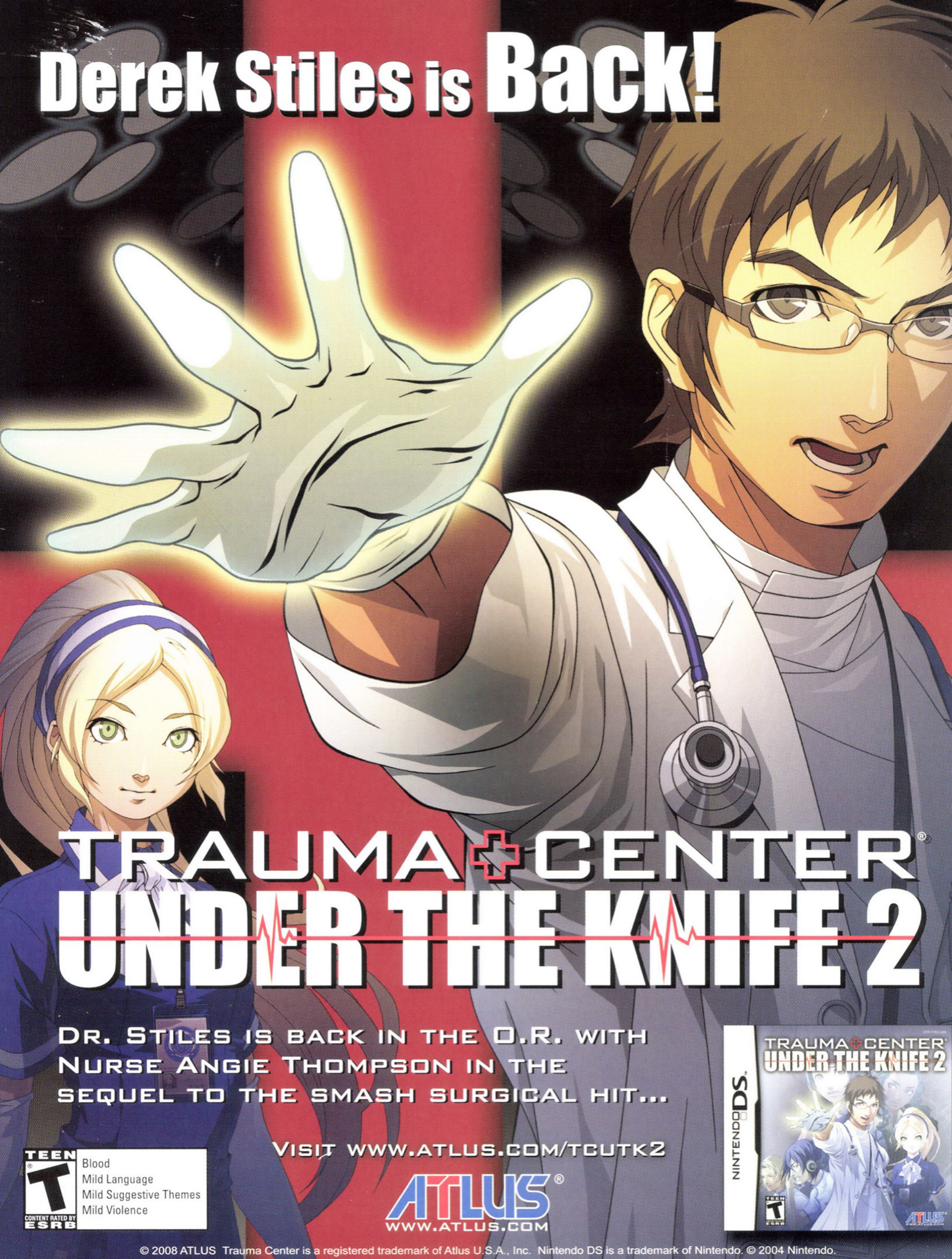
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